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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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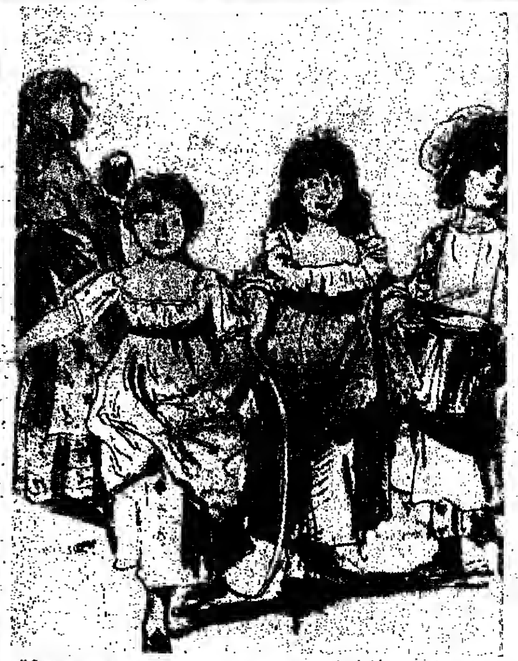

"Costume designs for four young Girls with Toys", by Alexandre Benois, for a production of Tchaikovsky's La Dame de Pique at the Marinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, in 1919. This is one of a series of sketches by Benois for the opera in a sale of "Theatre, Ballet, and Music-Hall Material" to be held at Sotheby Parke Bernet's large galleries, 34-5 New Bond Street, London, at 2.30 pm on October 23. Included in the sale are designs by Alphonse Mucha for three productions by Sarah Bernhardt, Amphitryon, Lorenzaccio, and Medea; a portrait of Bernhardt by Julien de Lyon, 1885; designs by Marcel Multzer and Th. Thomas for plays produced by Bernhardt; a portrait of Tamara Karsavina by Léon Kamir-Kaufman; and the design by Léon Bakst for the Syrian Dancer in Diaghilev's 1909 production of "Cléopâtre" in Paris. See also the picture on page 1160.

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Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers to that they reach this office not later than Friday, November 7. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, P.O. Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of November 14.

Competition No 41

1 *Dulce* it is, and decorum, no doubt, for the country to fall, to
Offer one's blood an oblation to Freedom, and die for the cause; yet
Still, individual culture is also something.

2 Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies (and God knows what antipathies).

3 And all my endeavours are unlucky explorers
come back, abandoning the expedition;
the specimens, the lilies of ambition
still spring in their climate, still unpicked:
but time, time is all I lacked
to find them, as the great collectors before me.

Result of Competition No 37

Winner: N. J. Kennedy, Tupe Fern Way, Bedford Mess. 01730, USA.

Answers:

1 Minor: Lee, Willard, Rosmer, Medlam, Flint
Possessed the land which vendeved to their toil.
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wind.
—R. W. Emerson, "Humanity".

2 Pilbeam — Kaan Bagnall — Penardington — Addington — Lindack — Sturch — Morrison — Newsome — Ludovick — Strauff — Brench — Densher — Hombes — Dominal — Camberbridge — Mart (or plaza) — Norrington — Frog (or place) — Trumper — Husk — Victry — Dunrose — Mitrose — Croy — Mitch — Milmore.

Books, 1899
—Henry James, *Notebooks*, 1899

3 Funny names are my hobby. I collect them the way other people collect coins or stamps. Some I take from real life, some I make up—the former of course the wildly more improbable. Just Nott, for example, I saw with my own eyes on the window of a hairdresser's while passing through Kansas on a train. It is entered in a section of my collection devoted to Paronomastic Names that form phrases, as thought: Justin Case, Miles Long, Brighton Early, Cort Mapper, D. B. Still and the like. It was I who first coined the name Herbie Hind, now, of course, part of American folklore.
—Peter De Vries, *The Vale of Laughter*, Chapter 1.

Idioms in interfusion

By Henry Gifford

JOSEPH BRODSKY:
A Part of Speech
152pp. Oxford University Press. Paperback £4.95.
0 19 211939 7

Now that the first collection of Brodsky's poems written since he left the Soviet Union in 1972 is presented (or most of it, with some additional poems from before and since) in English, his stature must be apparent. Here is that rare thing at the present time—a major poet. Three years ago *A Part of Speech* (poems 1972—1976) and its predecessor *The End of a Beautiful Era* (poems 1964-1971) were published in Russian at Ann Arbor (*TLS*, August 11, 1978).

Brodsky has gathered an able team of translators: it includes Richard Wilbur, Daniel Weissbort and Anthony Hecht. Often working with the author, under whose eye all the completed versions passed for final adjustments, they have made this volume not unworthy of the original. To say that of any translation is high praise. Here, most remarkably, Brodsky himself has been solely responsible for the main sequence of poems, from which the book takes its title, and for one other, "Florence", in addition to which he has written in English the "Elegy: for Robert Lowell". Every poem in the book reads as if English had been its first home. Some are better than others (particularly those handled by Brodsky and by George L. Kline). He may now be considered as at the very least a "corresponding member" of the company of English and American poets, one whom they are bound to take into account, and from whom there are certain notes to be recovered for poetry or strengthened—those of entire conviction about its value, of subtlety with directness, abundance with economy, the total absence of self-regard, a serious playfulness, and the refusal to juggle with various forms of rhetoric and anti-rhetoric.

Among poets he admires is Montale, and particularly for the tone of the *Xenia* poems to his dead wife. Brodsky has said:

> Montale is old enough to know that the classicists' "great" line, however immaculate its conception, flatters the audience and is a kind of short cut to self-deception.

Brodsky does not flatter his audience, being accustomed to address those whom only the truth can make free.

Translating verse from Russian presents two main difficulties. One is in the language which almost invariably fills out a line of specified length with fewer words. This encourages the austerity that so often breaks into good Russian poetry, a purity of outline according well with a language which, being for the most part unmixed Slavonic, is unusually limpid. The other problem is one of appropriate form. Russian poetry has not yet very significantly opened its gates to free verse. The whole variety of traditional forms, refreshed earlier this century by an experimental freedom with rhyme, is available to the poet, and almost obligatory for the translator of foreign poetry that has used such forms. Brodsky and his collaborators follow the Russian example, and Alan Myers for one, working with the author, has allowed himself rhymes that in Pasternak or Mayakovsky would disconcert nobody: *morning* and *metallic brow*; *suffices, surface as, reduces its size.*

The peril of careening verbosity has to be met. Anthony Hecht is a gifted manipulator of words, and all would be well with his spirited version of "Lullaby of Cape Cod", if it did not suggest, say, a more expansive Louis MacNeice rather than Brodsky. His ingenuity is beyond question, but he has been too indulgent, actually in some stanzas exceeding the number of lines by half as many again. Where Brodsky writes of the looking-glass effect of exchanging one empire for another that "your parting . . . has been displaced to the left", this becomes:

> the mirror's revelation that the part
> in your hair
> that you meticulously placed on the
> left side

mysteriously shows up on the right.

"The thought of Nothingness" has to be "a queer, vertiginous thought", and "tails" (of a coin) "its opposite (tails), its double, its underside". "Death" is glossed as "that punctuation mark", "the clockface" as "a broad, bottomless sea". Thus an important poem loses its admirable tautness. The reader's mind is given no work to do, because Hecht has removed the need for what Mandelstam always expected from his audience, the power of divination; and most readers of poetry are lazy enough anyway in an age dominated by prose.

Yet, as George F. Kline shows in his accomplished rendering of an intricate poem, "The Butterfly", identical form can be used felicitously when the translator responds to a poem's movement within its fixities. Here is one of its fourteen stanzas:

> Should I say that, somehow
> you lack all being?
> What, then, are my hands feeling
> that's so like you?
> Such colours can't be drawn
> from nonexistence.
> Tell me, at whose insistence
> Were yours laid on?
> Since I'm a mumbling heap
> of words, not pigments,
> how could your hues be figments
> of my conceit?

That last word, recalling the graces of our own seventeenth-century verse, is peculiarly apt in rendering perhaps the only Russian poet to have known the English Metaphysicals.

The longer the line, the more difficult it becomes to achieve what Kline has done. Another good translator here, Alan Myers, has rendered a group of poems with an English setting—on such places as East Finchley, North Kensington and York (this last a moving requiem for Auden). With all but one of them he drops the requirement to rhyme, and keeps very close to the movement of the original. Such fidelity is more valuable than anything but the very rare tour de force of pretty exact formal equivalence. For one poem a common ossuonce is employed:

> Stone Villages
> The stone-built villages of England.
> A cathedral bottled in a pub
> window.
> Cows dispersed across the fields.
> Monuments to kings.
>
> A man in a moth-eaten suit
> sees a train off, heading, like everything here, for the sea,
> smiles at his daughter, leaving for
> the East.
>
> A whistle blows
> And the endless sky over the tiles
> grows bluer as swelling birdsong
> fills.
> And the clearer the song is heard,
> the smaller the bird.

In the middle stanza Larkin's "Whitsun Weddings" comes into view. Brodsky knows his English-speaking contemporaries. He wrote an elegy for T. S. Eliot in 1965 modelled on Auden's for Yeats. "Elegy: for Robert Lowell" shows an awareness of "For the Union Dead", just as the fifteen poems (there are five more in the Russian) forming the sequence "A Part of Speech" bear some relation to Lowell's *Notebook*. He is sensitive to an unusually wide range of poetry. "Nunc Dimittis", venturing on the ground of Eliot's "A Song for Simeon", is almost a companion-piece for Pasternak's "Christmas Star". This gift of assimilation, often admired in Pushkin, also makes Brodsky an exceptional critic. One may cite his articles on Cavafy and Montale, both in the *New York Review of Books* during 1977, and his recent introduction to selected critical and autobiographical prose by Tsvetaeva.

He quotes her famous couplet:

> The poet from afar has taken
> speech.

Speech takes the poet far, and comments that because she was herself taken a long way, Tsvetaeva became "the most interesting thinker of her time". Brodsky too has that philologist's passion which—together with an admiration for his versatility—must have drawn him to Auden. Thus he becomes a translator of his own work on the level of Beckett and Nabokov, though up till now only in the one direction. It is no matter for him of displaying virtuosity, but the pursuit of the poet's vocation in a new and not unpromising context—that of a language even richer than his own, with another compass of subtleties, and a potential kept alive by the immense variety of its users from different backgrounds. A very intelligent foreigner who makes English his own, already alerted to the possibilities of expression, does more obviously what the poet has always done: he takes the stiffness out of clichés and restores to a language its youthful suppleness. One can detect in these versions Brodsky's delight at finding to hand an idiom that becomes his own: "As for the stars, they are always an"; for "not that I am going out of my mind", "Not that I am losing my grip"; and for "it's boring to live", "Life is a drug". A poet writing in another language is reborn into a second, parallel life, and the two lives will interfuse.

Working over those poems he has kept impressively close to the original. The English versions like the Russian are cavalier in their movement, pausing at the end of the line in a seesaw or (to change the metaphor) driving the sentence lurchingly through the customary signals to stop. One of the most involved and seemingly intractable poems is that which opened the sequence in 1977. Brodsky's handling of it rises to the occasion:

> From nowhere with love the early of,
> Marchember sir
> sweetie respected darling but in the
> end
> It's irrelevant who for memory won't
> restore
> features not yours and no one's
> devoted friend
> greets you from this fifth last port
> of earth
> resting on whalelike backs of
> cowherding boys
> I loved you better than angels and
> Him Himself
> and am farther off due to that from
> you than I am from both
> of them now late at night in the
> sleeping vale
> in the little township up to its
> doorsnobs in
> sunny writhing upon the stale
> sheets for the whole matter's skin—
> deep I'm howling "young"
> through my pillow like
> many seas away that are milling
> nearer
> with my limbs in the dark, praying
> your double like
> an insanity-stricken mirror.

The "umpteenth of Mortcher" has become "the earth of Marchembar", perhaps for the two English words embedded there; the sheets are now "stale", to their gain, from the pumping of rhyme, which has also realized the pillow as a dike; and from "pillow" may come the "milling" of the seas. Here he is being taken by language to new insights. There are also two clarifications. In the Russian this fifth continent was "supported on cowboys", "Resting on whalelike backs of cowherding boys", as the single note to this poem points out, drawn on an ancient myth. In the following line the reference to "Him Himself" (without capitals in the Russian) was timelessly. Now in its slightly awed closeness it cannot be mistaken.

One more example of his mastery, from the final poem in the series:

> . . . I would sleep in my clothes
> or just pluck a harrowed
> book, while what's left of the year's
> slack rhythm,
> like a dog abandoning its blind
> owner,
> crosses the road at the usual zebra.
> Freedom
> is when you forget the smelling of
> the tyrant's name
> and your mouth's saliva is sweeter
> than a Persian pie . . . .

"The year's slack rhythm" is happily eased in for the Russian-type rhyme with "freedom"; "the usual zebra" succeeds "the appointed place"; worry about the tyrant's patronymic is transferred to the spelling of his name; and "the halva of Shiraz" settles down comfortably in Main Street as "Persian pie". There is a catching absurdity in the phrase "sweeter than Persian pie" which should ensure it a long life outside the poem.

The poetry of dissidence from Eastern and Central Europe has gone through politics to another region. It is quite unlike the poetry of protest in countries where revolution is still an ideological term; and it seems likely to turn the nucleus of a human and unflinching poetry for the coming age. Brodsky's displacement from Russia, like that of many other talented writers, is a personal misfortune and should be a national grief. But a diaspora can bring timely benefit to those who receive its members. Brodsky writes much of the two Empires which confront each other. In the past, Empires have been saved from decay by the influx of barbarians. We are all shuffling down the road to barbarism now; but we can learn from the missionaries who arrive among us, with their capacity to make old things new, and to bind together the two halves of that European culture which poetry at least can never lose.

Unconfirmed Reports from the Land of Lost Content

Eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one
Looping porunolus of celluloid,
A table-tennis ball chink-chunks
Against the green slats of a wooden shed,
White day declings from its meridian,
A lozier ellipse, burned on bare arms,
The cat collapses in the strawberry bed,
Lawn-mowers bury, shears click, an aeroplane
Inches its parallels across the sun,
A wireless chanters at the kitchen door,
England at Lords are 86 for 4,
A child, cross-legged, reunite as porcelain,
In Army-and-Navy swimming trunks
And a Ladybird singlet, mounts his bicycle,
Then swirls to chattering dises the upturned rims.

Where the rain-butt weeps along the garden wall,
He traces out, on arcane, shaded knees,
A world of water droplets, each precise,
Pellucid, pendulumed in elegies
For childhood and June weather, innocence
Spectacular and meaningless, for all
Our language of diminishing returns,
Words in a landscape, contrived impotence
Reclining on its grammar, like a Turk,
While the electric whirrings of fat bees
Through light and shade's meticulous fretwork
Build feckless afternoons in paradise,
And dragonflies torpedo through the canes.

John Whitworth

Diva in distress

By Peter Conrad

ARIANNA STASSINOPOULOS:
Maria: Beyond the Callas Legend
329pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 297 77544 8

Thanks to Arianna Stassinopoulos's voice ministrations, Maria Callas has graduated from opera to the sudsier, sublimer realm of soap opera. From now on she can be famous not for her vocal and dramatic genius but for her offstage agonies—her rankling feud with her mother, her rejection by Onassis, her unsatisfied longing for a child, her struggle to acquire an identity. In soap opera you are immortalized by your distresses, not by your achievements. Suffering endows you with existential distinction and spiritual grace: at Maxim's on the night of Onassis's marger with the widow Kennedy, Callas "gave one of the greatest performances of her career", smiling remorselessly—"only someone", says Arianna Stassinopoulos, "who had looked closely into her dark eyes could have seen the anguish that had dimmed their light". Stassinopoulos, by implication, is that compassionate someone, and her book is not an account of Callas's virtually single-handed rejuvenation of opera after the war but a diagnosis of the psychological and sensual miseries endured by the mere woman she calls, throughout, simply Maria.

In penetrating—as is her avowed aim—"beyond the Callas legend", Stassinopoulos has devolved that legend, which she regards as an encrustation of pretence and bravado and incapacitating self-consciousness, an obstruction preventing the luckless Maria from attaining happiness. The book is intended as an emotional restitution. Maria needed love: Arianna (if I may briefly avail myself of the chummy, first-name principle employed throughout the book, not only for Callas but for "Jack" and "Jackie" Kennedy and "Aristo" Onassis) lavishes it on her, remarking that though she began her research "with deep respect and admiration for whoe she did . . . I ended by loving her".

The product of that devotion is a character Juan Crawford should be living at this hour to coach, a Mediterranean Mildred Pierce—a woman forbidding and belligerent, the scourge of process-serving deputy sheriffs and baritones intimidated by their high notes, who employs her voice as an instrument of aggression and vendetta, who though rich scours dime stores for bargains on lemons squeezers and potato peelers, who after obliging EMI expensively to cancel a *Traviata* recording rings one of the company's executives to ask if he could negotiate a discount for her on a new television set, who invites her mother to jump out of the window or drown herself if she can't afford to go on living; and yet who conceals inside this armoury of ill-temper and ruthlessness a quivering, shy and fragile girl, longing for a man to kiss her into beauty and submission. Stassinopoulos accords to Callas a mythological status, but not because of her musical talents. What makes the Maria of this book a creature from fable is her sudden and startling weight-loss. Emaciation becomes a "fairy-tale transformation", and is presented as the exhilarating climax of Maria's early career. Characteristically, Arianna Stassinopoulos is content to regard this fat-shedding as Maria's metamorphosis into "a woman of magnetic beauty and personality". She does not vex herself with the harm it might have done to Callas, whose voice was weakened and unsettled by the drastic physiological change.

The book is competently researched. In an afterword Miss Stassinopoulos generously acknowledges the assistance she has had from surviving friends and relatives and the interviews of Callas tapes. Her own contribution is less a matter of psychological insight or musical erudition than of intuition and commiseration, those prerogatives of the persuasive Miss Stassinopoulos once tautologically entitled "the female woman". Womanly empathy not only vouchsafes some sage asides—Maria abides Onassis's maltreatment and his infidelities because, we are told, Greek women are trained in sexual self-immolation; Onassis, vacillating between Tina and Maria, "was not the first man, nor" (Miss Stassinopoulos darkly adds) "would he be the last, who wanted both his wife and his mistress"—but licenses her to read thoughts and interpret dreams.

When there's no evidence, feminine supposition will do just as well. "Music and work became the stuff of Maria's waking life and, as far as anyone can tell, of her dreaming life too." As a child in New York, Maria listens to opera records, gazing vacantly—" What at? Palaces, carriages, jewels and knights in armour? Or was it already real velvet curtains and adoring audiences?" Arianna and Maria seem lacked in a sorority of posthumous intimacy. The adolescent Maria remained sadly ignorant "of the magic of friendship, of that peculiar intimacy which comes to those . . . who have shared dreams in the twilight". The biographer, we are to assume, is someone who might have confided her dreams and secrets to. This sense of a privileged, confessional union between herself and her subject prompts Miss Stassinopoulos to legislate about Maria's sexual history: "There is nothing to suggest that up until that time any man had inspired her with the slightest erotic excitement, and there is no indication that Battista Meneghini did either". But in what world such indications consist? Do we document our slightest erotic excitements? I hope not. Miss Stassinopoulos would reply, presumably, that "a woman *knows* these things".

These objections will be overruled by Miss Stassinopoulos because her access to Callas, as she declares, has not been through the male and manual drudgery of when she rolls "theoretical interpretation" but via the charmed medium of feminine feeling. Miss Stassinopoulos proposes her own research method as a modal of that spiritual awakening which is the subject of a previous book of hers. She started by thinking—"holding her up to the light of close scrutiny"—but soon turned off the light to enjoy the subliminal gloom, enticing Callas "to invade my dreams". Having "suspended judgment", Miss Stassinopoulos now begun to quiver and vibrate in her turn with "the full force of the passion that was fuelling [Maria's] life". This reversion to gynocratic unreason is not only the book's biographical technique but the moral of its subject's existence: Callas's visceral style of living and performing raised consciousnesses by restoring to us our contact with "the deeper, primordial self, home both of the darkness we harbour and of all life-giving forces". She was a priestess of that cult of religious feeling, revelling in transcendental emotion unencumbered by doctrine, to which Miss Stassinopoulos herself is a recent convert. Irrationality, imagining itself to be a proof of spiritual superiority, allows the biographer to resurrect her cremated subject in the book's last sentence: "Maria's ashes were lost forever in the sea she loved. She lives on, like every great spirit, uncaught for ever."

As one who admired and is grateful for Callas's gifts—to whom indeed opera made sense only after hearing her records—I deplore this appropriation of her, because it contends that the woman's artistry (that calcified "legend" of which Miss Stassinopoulos is so critical) is less significant than her private traumas. It's a libel on her, and one I think she would have resented. She insisted that she should be remembered only in her work, though Miss Stassinopoulos in quoting her prohibition defends herself by saying that this is only the austere, impersonal legend talking. Enrolling Callas in her new religion, Miss Stassinopoulos joins the ranks of her exploiters—the people who confined and destroyed her by wanting a live, through her, refashioning her to fit the image they had of her. Callas knew it was the celebrity's fate to sacrifice herself to those who worship her, to make them the gift of her privacy.

During her life, everyone had designs on her. Some of these claims were territorial. The *New York Times* reported her early Italian successes under the headline "New Yorker excels". In interviews she often indignantly denied that she was born in Brooklyn, as everyone loudly insisted. "*Should* I have been born in Brooklyn?" she would add. The query summed up her dilemma—half rancorous, half abject; half rebelling against the press's fictionalization of her life, half wearily acquiescing in it, wondering whether after all it might not be her duty to have been born in Brooklyn. Some claims were legal. People who always maintaining that they had invented and therefore owned her—like the litigious agent Bagarozy, after her death her mother and her discarded husband, who squabbled over her estate. Other claims were social and sexual. Elsa Maxwell wanted her in her a party-goer, famous not for singing but for being famous, and Onassis demanded that she become a dependent household convenience.

Even her directors were intent on colonizing her, relocating her in their fantasies and solving her problems of their own by sending her as the adored but feared Lucia, Violetta, Tosca and Norma. For Visconti in their productions La Scala she was an aristocrat, decadent style; for Zeffirelli, a *Tosca* a replica of Anna Magnani, "exuberant, warm-hearted, slippy, casual"; for Pasolini, Medea she was a psychotic and destructive mother.

Visconti said "one must serve Callas", but I suspect that he meant one must use her. Her agreements with him were a succession of a self he had scrapped. In *La Sonnambula* she wanted to be an ingenuous village girl; Visconti wanted her to be an adequate parody of herself, "Maria Callas playing a village girl". In Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda* she wanted to be a Greek; he made her impersonate a character extracted from the Venetian rococo. Just as Onassis found at her singing, so Pasolini belatedly remarked that "I'm aware of her professional abilities, but they are merely of very little interest to me. It's from personal qualities that I realized I could make a film". Her home in Paris was designed as a mausoleum in the French empire style by a decorator who expected a shrine which Maria instinctively and successfully evaded; and, however unattractive Mr Pedigree's pursuit of small boys may be, it is free of the sadism which for Sophy is a necessary part of sexual pleasure.

Despite this reasonably naturalistic background this book marks a return, in some ways, to the mode of the first five novels. The action is heavily allegorical, replete with metaphysical and eschatological implications. The name of the small town near London where much of the action takes place, Greenfield, undermines its claim to real, rather than symbolic existence. There is much in the narration that remains inexplicable or unexplained, and it seems likely to require (and will unknowingly received as much exegesis as the earlier novels.

Again by contrast, *Rites of Passage* is relatively uncomplicated—at least in this respect; it has its own complications, but they are immanent, rather than transcendent. It bears a distinct resemblance to *The Pyramid*, though the hero has emerged from adolescence; it, too could be described as class novel and *Bildungsroman* combined, and it could undoubtedly adopt the same epigraph to indicate its subject.

Edmund Talbot, a young man of good family, is going out to the Antipodes to take up a post in a governor's entourage; at the behest of his noble godfather he keeps a journal of his experiences on the voyage. Not long after they have set sail Talbot unwittingly arouses the ire of Captain Anderson (by trespassing without permission on the quarterdeck); the latter, fearful of the young man's influence and rumnexions, looses his anger on an unprotected victim: the simple, poor and unprepossessing parson, Robert Colley, who, in ignorance, repeats Talbot's offence.

While Talbot is overcoming, in his hutch of a cabin, the resistance of the fair, if painted, Zenobia Brocklebank, Colley (as we later learn from his journal) is undergoing, at the ceremony of crossing the Line (to which the title refers), indignities at the hands of officers and crew, encouraged by the captain. When recovered he obtains apologies from captain and officers, enters the fo'c'sle to remonstrate with the crew, to his innocence is made beastly drunk by them, takes to his bed and dies of shame. Talbot obtains possession of Colley's papers and learns from them of his pure and innocent love for the handsome foreign man Billy Rogers, a love which he compares to his own sordid and artificial relationship with Zenobia. Later a seaman's chance remark, overheard and reported by a passenger who believes it to refer to the use of tobacco, casts light on what happened in the fo'c'sle and provides the real reason for Colley's agonising shame: "Billy sold his beloved most things in his thin but he had never thought to get a chew off a parson."

Colley's fate deeply affects Talbot, but, as with Oliver in *The Pyramid*, the feeling is short-lived. His self-esteem rapidly recovers from the remorse he experienced; in a final scene (which directly echoes an episode from the beginning of *The Spire*) he overhears two passengers criticizing his manner, one officer of good family, turns out to be a bully, drunkard and cad; Summers, who has "come aft through the barrelhole", has been a common sailor, proves to be the real gentleman, and it is he who points out to Talbot that the privilege he enjoys brings with it responsibilities which he has so far ignored.

That William Golding should have chosen to set a novel on a ship of the line during the Napoleonic wars is unexpected, but not altogether surprising, in view of the fact that he once wrote a short parody of Hornblower, prefaced by the remark: "C. S. Forester might guess, from the scholarship it shows, what enjoyment he has always given me. There is no meanness in the parody—only gratitude." ("It's a long way to Oxyrynchus", *Spectator*, July 7, 1961.) What is surprising, by comparison with the other novels—in particular, perhaps, *The Spire*—is the way in which he allows himself to be limited by the narrow confines, not only of the ship, but also of the period. There is no real sense, as there is elsewhere, of issues which reverberate beyond the boundary of the book, or of problems being posed which remain without solution. Indeed, instead of problems, the author uses the device of the double narrative to set us puzzles which we may or may not endeavour to solve using the clues that are given, secure in the knowledge that, as in a detective story, the answer will eventually appear.

So, until we read Colley's narrative, we do not know the reason for the hubbub which disturbs Talbot in his efforts to board Zenobia and force her to lower her flag. He is too occupied with his cabin and the progress of his *affaire* even to tell us that the ship is approaching the equator. Yet he earlier gives us, unknowingly, a clue when he records a mention by the ship's carpenter of "the badgar bag", and pauses for a moment to wonder at the meaning of the expression. Were he to speak "the tarry language", or "Tarpaulin", as he puts it, he would know this to refer to Neptune and his court in the ceremony of crossing the Line. This episode exemplifies another aspect of the novel's method. As it progresses our knowledge is expanded; some of our initial impressions are changed. But there is never the earlier radical reinterpretation of events. Colley's journal, when added to Talbot's, gives us a point of view from a different angle, not from another dimension.

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Speaking the tarry language

By T. J. Binyon

WILLIAM GOLDING:
Rites of Passage
278pp. Faber and Faber. £5.95.
0 571 11639 6

William Golding once remarked, during a radio interview, that he saw little point in writing two books that were like each other. And certainly it is hard to imagine a more striking contrast than that between his latest novel and its predecessor, *Darkness Visible* (1979), with which the author broke a silence of some eight years. *Darkness Visible*, the story, narrated by an omniscient author, of Matty, born from the burning bush of the Blitz, who grows up to become a modern Ezekiel, of the paedophile Sebastian Pedigree, of the beautiful moral twins Sophy and Toni Sanhope, is wide-ranging, full of incident, up to date, even resolutely with it. *Rites of Passage*, which deals, with life on board a former ship of the line, carrying cargo and passengers to Australia, is narrowly confined, relatively lacking in incident, takes place some time between 1805 and 1814, and is told in the first person, through journals kept by two of the passengers.

If it is true that no Golding novel is like any other, it is also true that his first five novels—*The Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire* (1964)—do form a relatively homogeneous set. They share the same preoccupations, exhibit the same imaginative power, are set in simplified or remote worlds, deal with isolated individuals or with small groups, possess of the quality of fable or myth, demand the reader's intense and constant attention, and tend to employ the same mechanical device—the final switch from one point of view to another which brings about a surprising, sometimes indeed shocking, reinterpretation of what has gone before. As when we realize, with the last words of *Pincher Martin*, that the whole of the book's action has taken place after Martin's death.

With *The Pyramid* (1967), in many ways the most accessible and pleasing of his novels, Golding seemed to turn in something much more conventional: a mixture of *Bildungsroman* and class novel set in 1930s Barsetshire, rich in characters and highly naturalistic—so much so indeed that among the Trollopian place names occurs (possibly inadvertently) the real Wiltshire town of Calne. Although the narration has its ambiguities, we are not required to make the effort of comprehension demanded earlier: the first paragraph tells us that the narrator is an adolescent, unhappy in love, living in an English country town; and our perception of events is not radically altered by any later revelation.

The subject of the novel is conveyed by the Egyptian epigraph, a quotation from the Instructions of Ptah-Hotep: "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart". Interesting, in the light of later works, is the introduction of the homosexual Mr Evelyn De Tracy, set against and contrasted with the seductive and corrupt Evie Bobhacombe. There seems to be increasingly the feeling, in this and subsequent novels that homosexual love is purer, more innocent and less sinful than heterosexual love. "Clonk Clonk", one of the three novellas which make up *The Scorpion God* (1971) depicts a primitive society of some hundred thousand years ago in which the males are innocent homosexual hunters, the females guilty heterosexual alcoholics. The idea is present, too, in *Darkness Visible*: heterosexual love is a sinister affair of "big-breasted and successfully ovulate"; and, however unattractive Mr Pedigree's pursuit of small boys may be, it is free of the sadism which for Sophy is a necessary part of sexual pleasure.

Despite this reasonably naturalistic background this book marks a return, in some ways, to the mode of the first five novels. The action is heavily allegorical, replete with metaphysical and eschatological implications. The name of the small town near London where much of the action takes place, Greenfield, undermines its claim to real, rather than symbolic existence. There is much in the narration that remains inexplicable or unexplained, and it seems likely to require (and will unknowingly received as much exegesis as the earlier novels.

Again by contrast, *Rites of Passage* is relatively uncomplicated—at least in this respect; it has its own complications, but they are immanent, rather than transcendent. It bears a distinct resemblance to *The Pyramid*, though the hero has emerged from adolescence; it, too could be described as class novel and *Bildungsroman* combined, and it could undoubtedly adopt the same epigraph to indicate its subject.

Edmund Talbot, a young man of good family, is going out to the Antipodes to take up a post in a governor's entourage; at the behest of his noble godfather he keeps a journal of his experiences on the voyage. Not long after they have set sail Talbot unwittingly arouses the ire of Captain Anderson (by trespassing without permission on the quarterdeck); the latter, fearful of the young man's influence and rumnexions, loosos his anger on an unprotected victim: the simple, poor and unprepossessing parson, Robert Colley, who, in ignorance, repeats Talbot's offence.

While Talbot is overcoming, in his hutch of a cabin, the resistance of the fair, if painted, Zenobia Brocklebank, Colley (as we later learn from his journal) is undergoing, at the ceremony of crossing the Line (to which the title refers), indignities at the hands of officers and crew, encouraged by the captain. When recovered he obtains apologies from captain and officers, enters the fo'c'sle to remonstrate with the crew, to his innocence is made beastly drunk by them, takes to his bed and dies of shame. Talbot obtains possession of Colley's papers and learns from them of his pure and innocent love for the handsome foreign man Billy Rogers, a love which he compares to his own sordid and artificial relationship with Zenobia. Later a seaman's chance remark, overheard and reported by a passenger who believes it to refer to the use of tobacco, casts light on what happened in the fo'c'sle and provides the real reason for Colley's agonising shame: "Billy sold his beloved most things in his thin but he had never thought to get a chew off a parson."

Colley's fate deeply affects Talbot, but, as with Oliver in *The Pyramid*, the feeling is short-lived. His self-esteem rapidly recovers from the remorse he experienced; in a final scene (which directly echoes an episode from the beginning of *The Spire*) he overhears two passengers criticizing his manner, one officer of good family, turns out to be a bully, drunkard and cad; Summers, who has "come aft through the barrelhole", has been a common sailor, proves to be the real gentleman, and it is he who points out to Talbot that the privilege he enjoys brings with it responsibilities which he has so far ignored.

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Together back-to-back

By John Summerson

MARY LUTYENS:
Edwin Lutyens
294pp. John Murray. £12.95.
0 7195 3777 0

In his great biography of Lutyens, published in 1950, Christopher Hussey wrote: "It is not only because Lutyens was that race and socially precious being, an artist entire and unrepressed, but because with all his tiresomeness he was so lovable, that the study of his peculiarities and of the psychology of his marriage, is so engrossing." Hussey's account of the marriage was, thanks to the generosity and good sense of the architect's widow, reasonably full and without prevarication, preserving, however, a certain delicacy appropriate to the time. Mary Lutyens, writing thirty years later, is, understandably, more matter-of-fact. The marriage is the central theme of the memoir of her father and she pursues it episodically, to the accompaniment of biographical material of a more quotidian and anecdotal kind.

Edwin Landseer Lutyens, the tenth child of a highly eccentric soldier-artist, was twenty-seven when he met Lady Emily Lytton who was twenty-two and just recovering from an infatuation with that dangerous man, twice her age, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. She was "longing for a complete and soul-satisfying love", and Edwin had already found that Sexual Intercourse had become repugnant to her. Edwin's absorption in his work, his perpetual pipe-smoking (especially nauseating during pregnancies) and his indifference to the more conventional intellectual exchanges defied all but the most trivial acts of communication. His world of building she could not enter. She appealed to him for she hardly knew what: "your intellect, something big to take hold of and share . . . If you would only make me equal to your pipe!" It was no good.

One might think that by this time the romantic foundations of their marriage would have sunk without trace. Not a bit of it. The letters which passed between them whenever they were separated show the contrary. Each partner is profoundly and lovingly sorry for the injuries inflicted on the other. There are no accusations, only recognitions of failure and resolves to try harder and do better. Edwin's adoration of Emily is unabated, her loyalty to him firm.

Then, in 1910, came a turning point. While she was staying at Varangeville, in Normandy, where Edwin was building a house, a book of Annie Besant's lectures came into Emily's hands. She was struck by the breadth of the Theosophist view and on returning to London not only joined the Society but cooperated in the transform of a new Theosophist lodge. She took to lecturing. Mrs Besant came to lunch and in no time at all Edwin was making designs for the Theosophist headquarters in Tavistock Square (built very much later and now the British Medical Association headquarters).

Now it might seem that both parties to the marriage had their destinies to fulfil and that things would work out better. Emily was on top of the world. Then, in 1912, during the commission to plan New Delhi, operating up to Simla (with the very country where the Theosophists had discovered the World Teacher in the person of a Brahmin boy called Krishnamurti. But the Indio of the Theosophists with their leftish, folksy ruralisms, and the world of protocol and committees in which the British administrators moved, were incompatible. "Your friends and my friends", wrote Edwin sadly, "cannot mix and there it is".

After the outbreak of war in 1914, it was the husband's turn to enter a phase of extreme loneliness, though he never showed it. The work at Delhi was suspended for the duration and there was little else to engage his creative energy. Emily, now completely absorbed in Theosophy, announced her formal repudiation of sex. Edwin, still adoring her, had no particular inclination to find consolation elsewhere. Emily, eventually, is what happened. In 1916, he met Lady Sackville, the neglected wife of the third Lord Sackville and illegitimate daughter of his cousin, the second Lord, by the Spanish dancer, Pepita. Seven years older than Lutyens, she employed him professionally to alter her houses at Brighton and Roedean. By 1923 the professional relationship had become a love affair and it seems to have lasted till 1930. The affair of "McNed" and "McSack", as they called each other, is neither grandly scandalous nor particularly edifying. It ended in a violent quarrel, the increasingly eccentric "McSack" pestering the President of the RIBA with grotesque complaints about Lutyens's professional conduct. Now that we know the facts, the whole episode seems singularly unimportant.

On Emily's side, the Theosophical vision had, by 1923, begun to alienate and she was moved to seek a return to the old relationship with her husband. On the anniversary of her wedding she wrote to him: "32 years!! Isn't it wonderful. How happy we have been in spite of ups and downs. Do you know any other couple so happy and so loving and so free after 32 years?" Could she really have meant this? On was it a gallant attempt to remove the over-strained fabric of mutual trust and affection which they had preserved for so long? It is impossible to say. But in the autobiography which she wrote after Edwin's death she set things differently. Her husband, she said, had "seemed to understand without words all I was going through and welcomed me back without a single reproach or reminder of how much of our life together I had wasted".

It is a sad story but Mary Lutyens, rightly, does not make a tragedy of it. There were, after all, compensations. Her book records happy occasions and friendships with splendid people. Her father's were heartedness. His inextinguishable sense of the absurd, his fantastic play with words and images, comes freshly from her recollections. She says little about architecture, more is being written about it than there is to be said. Lutyens's fulfilment lay in the joyous creation of a dwelling place, a place of protection, of ceremony, of delight, of surprise, of wit, of beauty, of mystery, of poetry. Of all these things there are plenty in this book.

A signed self-portrait by Caruso, inscribed by Miss Ninn Simpson, to be sold at Sotheby's next Thursday, October 23. See the picture and caption on the front cover.

History and mystery

By J. B. Steane

ROBERT NYE:
Faust
277pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95.
0 241 10202 2

"Sorry about that", says the narrator of Robert Nye's *Faust*, referring to his first chapter. He is not, of course, apologizing for his assaults on our sense of taste and smell. The squeamish, after all, were warned off by Falstaff early on in Nye's autobiography of him four years ago, and they have had time to grow a thicker skin since then: "Let no firm-buttocked virgin flinch from my report. . . . If that diet of experience prove too rich and strong a meal for some stomachs, then, Eat elsewhere, is my advice and wish you better appetite". No, what the narrator of *Faust* is rather engagingly regretting about his opening chapter is his style and technique: "I hate it myself when a book starts and you don't know the time or where you are or what's happened before you came in or who anyone is".

For that, at least, the narrator makes speedy amends. The time is Ash Wednesday, February 28, 1540, the place Staufan, near Freiburg. Twenty-four years "before you came to" Faust made his pact with the Devil; he did it a few minutes before midnight on Good Friday 1516, so that Good Friday 1540, forty days hence, will be particularly crucial. As to sorting out identities, the narrator assumes that we have heard of Faust and goes on to introduce himself. He is Christopher Wagner old from time to time Faust calls him Kit, Helfant and Gretchen also appear; there are jokes about Luther, "the great conspirator"; Calvin, "prescient, enthusiastically in Basel while in the front pew Faust takes brandy and Wagner his girl friends. In the form of a chastily intimate diary, mostly telling of the present but sometimes recalling the past, an account is given of those forty days (Faust's last) from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday.

During the course of this account, there is much to irritate and rapidly much that fascinates, even to admire. I personally had decided long before the end that it was a book I would not be re-reading—and on reaching the end realized that there was nothing for it but to return and start afresh. There's a certain appropriate devilry in that: whiness Nye's Merlin who on the last page gives from ear to ear and crosses himself with his tail. "'Begin', he says. 'Again', he says. 'Begin again,' he says. 'This is just the end of the story,' he explains".

Beginning again, then, this time knowing the story (which we might think we know already, but Mr Nye's story we do not know till the final page): ere we to get beyond "plot" and come, just possibly, to wisdom? Certainly there are illuminations of wisdom amidst all the bums and balls and the rest of it. Surprisingly, one's impression is not so much of a bawdy romp as of a hovering on the edge of mystery. "That's enough history, I prefer mystery", said Nye's Falstaff, and here, too, Wagner the servant is always tantolisingly at the edge of his master's understanding.

Faust's is the will determining Wagner's narration, and despite his glaring and grinning, his smells and boils, his slurping and falling about, his puppet-mastery and riddling mystery, he is the character who compels attention. Yet in the foreground, as we read, is Wagner's chatter, his ruderies, his single-word sentences and elegiac-sentence paragraphs. He is not quite Marlowe's Wagner, a cheeky little cockney who run run rings round the solemn university students, though Marlowe's surprisingly adroit comic characterization may have been his point of origin (as the "Christopher" and "Kit" also suggest). He has some of the verbal mannerisms of the catcher in the rye; he is in a sense the reader's familiar. And he is uninhibited in his descriptions of sexual experiences.

It might be argued that there is a difference in kind between the sex in Nye's novel and sex in a pornographic film because here are humour and inventiveness rather than lifeless routine and commercialism; but it is a tiresome routine when "come" cannot pass without a pun, and, as for commercialism, the author cannot be unaware that his writing invites the sort of "Warning" which I have seen displayed in a book-club's advance publicity of the novel—"This novel contains explicit sex scenes. And how!". Even more seriously self-defeating than the explicit sex is the unfailing liveliness of style. Nye's narrator, with his briskness, his vocabulary that is at once colloquial-common and imaginative-original, is so unfailingly bright that he becomes almost dull.

Fortunately, those defects recede as one remembers the book from a little distance. Into the foreground, oddly assorting with the modern manner of narration, comes the sixteenth century; and at the centre is Faust himself, who has made a spell for Robert Nye as he has also recently (and not such a dissimilar one) for D. J. Enright. "Mr Nye writes like Rabelais reborn": Kenneth Tynan's tribute to the author of *Falstaff* is the kind of label that sticks for life. Nye begins to emerge as himself, I fancy, only after the Rabelaisian guffaw has quietened down. It is not, to my mind, a particularly attractive sound at the best of times.

In remembrance of times past

By Anne Duchêne

JACQUETTA HAWKES:
A Quest of Love
220pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.50.
0 7011 2536 5

"I am what I am—and evidently always have been. Ono must forgive oneself", Jocquetta Hawkes says somewhere in this book. This is one of her more modest statements in a book designed to serve a fine cause, but doing so in ways which some readers are bound to find insufferably self-centred, others tasteless, and many others uproariously funny, the solecisms of narcissicism always seeming comic to onlookers: how far her readers forgive her must depend upon their private pieties, and how far they find the comedy obscures the cause.

Mrs Hawkes (one keeps the title, since she keeps the surname—and should it be said, for any uninitiated, young or exotic reader, that she is a distinguished writer on archaeology, as well as the wife, en *deuxième* noces, of a distinguished older writer, J. B. Priestley?) says *A Quest of Love* is "what I regard as autobiography", but the term seems inadequate, as she recounts not only her present life, but all her previous incarnations too, beginning with some appropriately squelchy and inarticulate primeval sex, and moving steadily on through, among others, her life as a Cretan Priestess, a Cretan aristocrat, a Bacchanal, a Roman matron of the governing class, the daughter of an Anglo-Norman lord in twelfth-century England, and a young Victorian blue-stocking invited to the small establishment at Hitchin that was to become Girton.

Mrs Hawkes acknowledged on the radio the other day that pretending all these experiences returned to her memory during a single week was "a literary artifice"; but certainly they are presented as "products of amamnesis" and "true uprisings of the psyche". Her intentions in recounting them go, naturally, well beyond the accidents of autobiography. Each of the book's ten sections is emblematic, epitomizing one or other of the roofs—physical, social, cultural—on which successfully balanced relations between the sexes may founder.

Thus, as a prehistoric shaman, she remembers being saved from death after breaking a taboo (fishing in the men's pool) by a suitor who at once becomes her master; and as a Corn Priestess suffering exile after showing her lover the female mysteries of the temple. As the intelligent, frustrated wife of a Greek mathematician-philosopher, she committed suicide. More urbanely, her Greek lover has to renounce her, in Crete, because she is a widow; and on a trip from Rome she is just a little too reasonable to agree to the degrading roll in the temple suggested by a kinsman of her husband who is an Etruscan nationalist rather like our own Cedric Jones ("it is smart to have 'Etruscan' kinsmen now, and Marius never fails to mention his"). The Church, with its savage sense of sin, breaks up her love-affair with Henry of Blois (Bishop of Winchester, and just beginning to build St Cross). It seems very familiar ground when as an advanced late Victorian she declines to yield her will to a sexually condescending suitor.

It will be noted that Mrs Hawkes always reincarnates in very comfortable or what are now called elitist circumstances; no doubt because she has always belonged too silly Hindu superstitions here) to the 20 per cent of women which, she says, "my Bronze Age readings finally persuaded me", have throughout history "been born with a slightly larger than normal share of active male characteristics".

Her view of women, however, is militant, rather than modern. Acknowledging that women in a male world "may be likened to secret heretics or to those settled in a foreign land who learn the language yet inwardly cling to their own", she despises today's rabid feminism: "for women to have so little confidence in the million-year-old name and values of their sex as to seek competitive identity with men that, surely, is humiliating in its stupidity".

Such evolution as the book posits lies, therefore, not in love and lovers—still subject to the same risks and failures—as in society, attitude towards them; partly achieved, of course, through her efforts and example of the 20 per cent. Hence, she claims, the doomed "middle complacencies" described in her final chapter, about her present life, in which she has achieved with Mr Priestley a relationship "richer and more whole than any that went before".

After the turmoil before the much-publicized postwar divorce ("we made love indoors and out, by day and by night, in borrowed offices and flats, in the box of a provincial theatre and the garden of the Institute of Archaeology"), they have attained "an equality of understanding" which this chapter attempts to convey, "as a proof that the setting free of women is bogius to offer an unbounded extension to the possibilities of human relationships". At no other time could a middle-class Englishwoman "have lived this story without social ostracism and submergence. She would she have allowed herself a rench fulfilment through such a course". So some ground has been gained and cleared: and "what a mercy it has proved to be that we stumble along to a happy ending".

These quotations, inevitably hand-drawn on the book's dialectical passages. The individual incarnations of the separate existences tend to fall into a rather flat, another prosy, with the occasionally turbulent patch of romantic purple (Mrs Hawkes's eye-entanglement at Knossos with the big, blond, blue-eyed barbarian prince newly disembarked from Pylos, for instance, would make Barbara Cartland pink with envy). A curious air of insincerity pervades the remembered experiences, as if one were reading Child's Guide to Socio-Sexual Confusions, such as any enlightened mother could put on nursery book shelves. Mrs Hawkes is happiest in intellectual argument; and her has a serviceness that makes one stratitude.

The lives of the poet

By D. M. Thomas

YURI KROTKOV:
The Nobel Prize
Translated by Linda Aldwinckle
249pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95.
0 241 10240 5

I am not sure what Yuri Krotkov was trying to achieve in this novel. Was he paying his own tribute to the memory of a great poet, Boris Pasternak? If so, his 60,000 words succeed less well than the sixty-odd words of Anna Akhmatova, in her "Death of a Poet". It is worth quoting her poem, which is not only fine in itself, but also persuades us of the quality of the writer to whom she is saying farewell:

The unrepeatable voice won't speak again,
Died yesterday and quit us, the talker with groves.
He has turned into the life-giving ear of grain
Or into the gentlest rain of which he sang.
And all she flowers that grew only in this world
Come into bloom to meet his death.
And straightway it's grown quiet on the planet
That bears a name so modest . . . Earth.

Even if we had never read a line of Pasternak, we would get an impression of his character, just from those simple lines. But in *The Nobel Prize* we have to take Pasternak's genius on trust. Nothing of the turbulence and infinite stress of "simply" being a major poet comes across. Only in the most banal way is his vocation conveyed to the reader: when he is made to ask, plaintively and narcissistically, if he may quote from his—or rather Zhivago's—poems. Of course his companion says "Of course" and we are given (unacknowledged) one of the Hayward/Hersh translations.

Or—perhaps—in fact more probably—Mr Krotkov intended to study the tragic dilemma of Pasternak vis-à-vis the state. The terrible position in which he found himself—knowing that acceptance of the Nobel Prize (and thereby slamming up publicly for the freedom of the artist) would mean him being forced to leave his homeland—only brought to a head the struggle which had been going on in his conscience since the beginning of the Bolshevik era. Never had he betrayed his principles or his fellow-man; but—unlike Akhmatova, for example—he had striven to see some good in Stalin and in the creation of a socialist state. The storm of abuse over *Doctor Zhivago* fell on a writer who could at least half-persuade himself that he was not anti-Soviet.

He faced, simultaneously, the evil of Russian society and the impossibility of his soul being able to live anywhere else. A tragedy of Greek proportions; and again Mr Krotkov is not capable of exploring it. He creates a scene of splendid fictional potential: Pasternak, after his heart attack, sharing a room in the Kremlin Hospital with one of the party-hacks, Polikarpov. Yet all he can do with it is have the poet deliver an anti-Communist diatribe, with Polikarpov (himself a bourgeois victim) going blue in the face. One can imagine what Solzhenitsyn would have made of such an opportunity.

Earlier, we are invited to imagine Pasternak's thoughts before going to sleep:

Pasternak lay awake for a long time. The last thought that flashed through his mind was the thought that Bernard Shaw had lived as an individualist, but had advocated socialism. So had Picasso, Sartre and others. Who had remained on the right? Were there any artists who had taken up a position on the right? Artists were always on the left. All, that is, but the author of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Well, of course it simply is not true. Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Borges, Frost? Or Pasternak would have had to think no further than his great contemporaries Akhmatova and Mandelstam. But the important point is that one cannot imagine Pasternak thinking in such puerile terms at all. It is as unlikely as another best-seller, by which Khrushchev dictates Boris Pasternak with his pile. The most improbable events are likely in the Soviet Union; but it strains credulity to picture the peasant-like Russian leader lying in bed with his wife discussing a poet.

A third possibility is that Krotkov's main intention was to explore Pasternak's tragic private life. Pasternak was torn between his legal wife, Zina, and his unofficial wife, Olga Ivinskaya (on whom Lara was largely based). A divided life which was supportable when the poet was younger and healthy became (it would seem) a torment as his life narrowed towards death. Apparently Pasternak wished to die in good conscience by saying good-bye to Olga and dying in the bosom of his family. His wife would not forgive him all the pain he had caused her. Yet Olga, at his end, was kept out of the poet's official house. She has, of course, given his own version of what happened, in her memoir *I Captive of Time*: a heartrending and—one suspects—truthful account. After she had news of her friend's death, she hurst into the house and so one tried to stop her. So she was able to say goodbye to the poet, as he had predicted in the concluding section of *Doctor Zhivago*. A photograph in Ivinskaya's book shows Pasternak in 1960—just before his death—still youthful-looking, his arm around Olga, who is fat, plain and with a tooth missing. One thinks of Lara, and in the brief gap between art and reality is one crossed and redeemed by love) one can see the enormous possibilities for a novelist or poet to get to work. But both Olga and Zina are one-dimensional in *The Nobel Prize*: it is a third woman, the widow of the Georgian poet Tabidze, who is also said to be in love with Pasternak and who wanders in and out of the book in a desultory fashion. *The Nobel Prize* is worse than a bad novel; it is a profoundly unsatisfactory one—a great theme wasted.

The Chekhov of the camps

By Geoffrey Hosking

VARLAM SHALAMOV:
Kolyma Tales
Translated by John Glad
222pp. W. W. Norton. £5.95.
0 393 01324 3

I remember the old northern legend of how God created the reign while he was still a child. There were few colors, but they were childishly fresh and vivid, and their subjects were simple. Later, when God grew up and became an adult, he learned to cut out complicated patterns from his pages and created many bright birds. God grew bored with his former child's world, so he threw snow on his forest creation and went south forever.

Thus Varlam Shalamov in "A Child's Drawings", one of the most haunting of this collection of stories. It was in this same Godforsaken and snow-covered landscape that the Soviet state decided, in the mid-1930s, to begin the mass exploitation of underground gold seams by means of slave labour of an unprecedented kind. Slaves, as is well known, are relatively unproductive: that has always been held to be the price which their owners paid for not giving them any wages. The NKVD, however, resolved to try and overcome the reluctance of their prisoners to work through the goad of hunger, that is, by deliberately undernourishing them unless they achieved high production norms. The result of this drastic device was, of course, that most of their slaves died.

But then, unlike traditional slaveowners, the NKVD paid nothing for their slaves, and could always replace dead ones by enslaving more people. Kolymn was the ultimate pole of this murderous system: a whole frozen continent, cut off from the rest of the Soviet Union (where labour camps formed a mere "archipelago") by hundreds of miles of wilderness, and always reached, therefore, by convict ships whose conditions recalled the Atlantic slave crossings at their worst. Robert Conquest, in his study of the region, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (TLS, May 12, 1978), estimates that three million prisoners probably died there under Stalin.

It was as long ago as the early 1960s that Shalamov's tantalizingly brief sketches of life in the Kolyma labour camps began to trickle out into the embryonic samizdat network first beginning to form in Moscow, Leningrad and one or two other Soviet cities. Solzhenitsyn read a good many of them before he came to put together his *Gulag Archipelago* in the late 1960s. Recognizing the importance of their testimony, he even invited Shalamov to share the authorship of his own work, and almost succeeded. Kolyma Tales bears witness to the strain of this partnership, which was supportable when the poet was younger and healthy became (it would seem) a torment as his life narrowed towards death. Apparently Pasternak wished to die in good conscience by saying good-bye to Olga and dying in the bosom of his family. His wife would not forgive him all the pain he had caused her. Yet Olga, at his end, was kept out of the poet's official house. She has, of course, given his own version of what happened, in her memoir *I Captive of Time*: a heartrending and—one suspects—truthful account. After she had news of her friend's death, she hurst into the house and so one tried to stop her. So she was able to say goodbye to the poet, as he had predicted in the concluding section of *Doctor Zhivago*. A photograph in Ivinskaya's book shows Pasternak in 1960—just before his death—still youthful-looking, his arm around Olga, who is fat, plain and with a tooth missing. One thinks of Lara, and in the brief gap between art and reality is one crossed and redeemed by love) one can see the enormous possibilities for a novelist or poet to get to work. But both Olga and Zina are one-dimensional in *The Nobel Prize*: it is a third woman, the widow of the Georgian poet Tabidze, who is also said to be in love with Pasternak and who wanders in and out of the book in a desultory fashion. *The Nobel Prize* is worse than a bad novel; it is a profoundly unsatisfactory one—a great theme wasted.

change Ltd, in London. The present volume, containing twenty-four stories, or about a quarter of the total, is the first in English.

The reader who comes to Shalamov with Solzhenitsyn in mind is bound to be a little disorientated at first. Shalamov does not aim at a panoramic view of the camp world. He contents himself with fragmentary insights, choosing the short story or sketch as his basic literary form. He eschews anything approaching the passion and bitterness of Solzhenitsyn's language, adopting instead a studiedly cool and neutral tone. Most of his stories focus on just one person or incident, and even within this self-limitation the presentation is sparing. Nature descriptions are straightforward, couched in the crude primary colours which are all that God had on his childhood palette. Physical description of people is minimal: a face or a hand seen in the dim light of a candle, a gesture glimpsed in the cold dawn. Psychological analysis and internal reflection are equally simple — though very precisely traced — for human psychology is blunted by cold, hunger and overwork to admit of only the most basic responses. Even the action of each story is presented laconically, with essential links merely hinted at or even unexplained, the logic of events being supplied only by the arbitrary and unfathomable designs of the authorities. The reader, like the newest arrival from a convict ship, has to unravel this logic himself, sometimes from the slightest of clues, until he has learnt his way around this strange and horrific world.

In his informative introduction, John Glad indicates that the closest author to whom Shalamov stands closest is Chekhov. The comparison is an apt and chilling one. The two worlds they describe are about as remote from one another as can be imagined, yet both writers have a capacity for brevity and apt selection of detail. Chekhov, working within a million of complex social conventions, lets individual gestures, articles of clothing or pieces of furniture evoke rich associations in the reader. Shalamov presents a much simpler world, in which these details are, if anything, even more significant because they are now a matter of survival itself. This certainly gives the Chekhovian techniques a new edge. Where Chekhov describes an evening stroll along the sea shore, Shalamov, in the same tone, describes exhuming a corpse to steal its clothes for warmth. The contrast between the restraint of his manner and the horror of his subject is what gives Shalamov's work its peculiar distinction.

In outlook Shalamov is an unreserved pessimist. If Solzhenitsyn was able to believe, sometimes at least, that labour camps offered the opportunity of self-discovery and redemption through suffering, Shalamov rejects this idea as self-deception: "The camps are a negative school of life in every respect. Nobody will ever learn anything useful or necessary from them. . . ." The most he will concede is a certain "spiritual calm", born of the hopelessness of trying to fulfil the official production norms, through acceptance of the inevitable. This is a calm "achieved by the dulling of the senses . . . and reminiscent of 'the dungeon's supreme freedom'". Shalamov is a pagan: he does not think in categories of sin and redemption, and for him man is created not in the image of God, but of rucks, trees and animals. In the story "Sententious" he remembers his recovery from total exhaustion bordering on death, and in his return to humanity he finds it possible to respond to elemental realities and to animals much earlier than to people, from whom he remained separated by "bitterness" (*Golobe*). "Bitterness was the last feeling with which man deported into nonbeing, into the world of the dead. But was it dead? Even a stone didn't seem dead to me, not to mention the grass, the trees, the river." In similar vein, he experiences fellow feeling for the dwarf cedar, the little tree which stoops and spreads its branches along the ground at the approach of winter, but straightens up again when spring comes, and shares with man the capacity for hope, sometimes mistaking a temporary thaw for a change of season.

In practice, Shalamov does not always exemplify the despair he professes. The characters who make up his various narrative personae are not totally corrupted by camp life. They do not betray others, they do not beat up and murder their fellow inmates, even if they accept these practices as customary and natural when others commit them. Shalamov comes over as a person who would rather retire into inaction and passive acceptance, while continuing to observe for himself a minimal code of duty. On one occasion ("My First Tooth"), he actually protests against the guards' arbitrary beating up of a prisoner, simply because his conscience stirs him to. His ethic, in fact, while not Christian, is close to that of the most highly regarded pagans in Dante's *Inferno*, the Stoics.

Shalamov has, moreover, the reserve which one associates with the Stoics. He always keeps a certain distance from his characters, even from those through whose eyes he is conducting the narration. This contrasts strongly with Solzhenitsyn's method, which is to plunge into the life of the people he is portraying, sharing their feelings and even their language, to the point where one is sometimes not at all certain whether it is he or they speaking. Compared with this, Shalamov's technique seems cool and almost dismissive. Perhaps for him the experience of writing has been like that which he describes in "My First Tooth": "Even if you can't get something published, it's easier to bear a thing if you can write it down. Once you've done that, you can forget. . . ."

Shalamov holds that the capacity to forget distressing experience, to slough it off, is an essential part of man's remarkable endurance, almost in the camps to be greater than that of any animal. "A human being survives by his ability to forget." Yet writing, of course, is remembering in order to forget. On his eventual release from Kolyma, Shalamov recalls how he had to struggle against the temptation "to forget everything, to cross out twenty years of my life—and what years!" The marks of this ambivalence lie in his stories, in their distant and disillusioned manner, and even more, perhaps, in the casual and unstructured way in which they have been published, as though their author, having ensured that what he and so many others had gone through should be remembered after all, was then anxious to be rid of them and forget them.

Does the same ambivalence also explain why there is no apparent overall structure to the *Kolyma Tales*, even in their full Russian version? They do not seem to form a cycle in the usual sense. There is no obvious first or last story, nor any apparent grouping within the collection, though of course similarities of theme can often be found. The order of presentation in the 1978 Russian edition seems haphazard, and the order of John Glad's selection is quite different from it, though somewhat more logical, in that he has grouped the tales loosely according to subject-matter. But it may be that, in fact, the stories are like the nameless convicts in "Sententious" who "materialise out of nowhere—one after the other" after work in the evening, and then next morning "disappear for ever".

The orphaned condition of these stories makes the job of editor and translator even more important than usual. Given that it was not possible to publish the whole collection at once, Glad has done, it seems to me, a good job with the selection and arrangement. I found here most of my old favourites, from *samizdat* and *Novyi Zhurnal* days, as well as one or two striking items which had not caught my attention before. About the translation I have somewhat more reservations: on the whole it captures Shalamov's tone of voice well, but it contains some inaccuracies and, on a brief check, one or two omissions, which are quite inexplicable in such concise texts. All the same, with this volume the work of bringing Shalamov to an English-speaking public has at last got off to a serious start. One can only echo Glad's hope that the other stories will appear before long too. It seems the least we can do for a writer whom Solzhenitsyn, with good reason, invited to become the co-author of his own greatest work.

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In the parrot-cage

By Michael Howard

MARK AMORY (Editor) :
The Letters of Evelyn Waugh
664pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95
0 297 77657 6

Evelyn Waugh was forty-one when the war—his war—ended in 1945. It is no age when most successful professional men have achieved their first senior position and look forward to a further twenty five years of increasing power, responsibility, and probably happiness. Many if not most creative artists, having passed through initial stages of imitativeness and experiment, have found their distinctive style and go on productively enriching it until the end of their lives. Not so Evelyn Waugh. "My life ceased with the war", he wrote nine years later. Alas, it did not. He lived on for another twenty years, to die at the comparatively early age of sixty-three: twenty years of acidic spent seeking relief from rural loneliness and boredom in drunkenness and worse boredom in London; toppling over occasionally into mental insanity; dependent for his writing, on introspection and memory; rejecting the world as totally as if he had entered a monastery, but without finding any alternative discipline and peace.

This melancholy picture of Evelyn Waugh is perhaps overdrawn in the collection of his letters under review, for out of 600 pages two thirds are taken up by his easily recoverable correspondence of the post-war years. This is no fault of the editor, Mark Amory, who has not only done a splendid job in identifying all the ephemeral, iridescent figures who flit through these pages but whose comments have much of Evelyn Waugh's own laconic outrageousness. This was the period in his life when Waugh, cut off for long periods from his scattered friends and at his wits' end to know how to pass his time, found most relief in letter-writing. Nor should one set too much store by letters written in hours of loneliness and despair. Happily married and the father of seven lively intelligent children, Waugh must have enjoyed many more hours of uneventful domestic pleasure. But the circumstances were not good. Uprooted from the metropolitan culture that he despised but on which he remained so dependent, he found no alternative pleasures in the country. He did not farm, garden or hunt. Having accumulated a large library, he does not seem to have read it; certainly he did not draw on it in his correspondence. Like so many other civilized ex-urbanites he was dependent on the latest novels sent him from Heywood Hill's elegant little bookshop in Curzon Street. Worst of all, his creative talent had dried up to a trickle. "I find three hours work in a day makes me so weary and so smug that I do nothing else for a week", he wrote, only seven years after the war. He hated what he could see of the world and he hated himself. And though he was a totally committed Roman Catholic he found no consolation in his religion. It simply presented him with a set of bleak, incontrovertible facts from which no personal comfort whatever could be drawn.

It is tempting to generalize from Evelyn Waugh about his generation and about the state of England as a whole. Up to a point it is justifiable to do so—so long as we start by recognizing his unique qualities. Of these the most important were ruthlessness and intensity. Both are to be seen in the glaring eyes of the young man drawn and painted by Henry Lamb as well as those of the portly old buffer in tweeds photographed in later life. Both are also to been seen in his prose, from which (except in the disastrous first version of *Brideshead Revisited*) every inessential word had been pruned. For a generation brought up on his novels, his predecessors—Meredith, Conrad, Galsworthy, Bennett—were for long almost unreadable. He did nothing by halves and had no time for those who did. He made no effort to understand politics: "I have never voted in a general election as I have never found a Tory stern enough to command my respect", he wrote at the time of the General Election in 1951. The whole teeming energy of the United States he totally rejected; in his eyes Americans were either boors or bores. He appears to have had no interest in music of any kind. In the arts he despised virtually everything which had been produced in his lifetime. As for literature, he prided himself on being out of touch with everything not had happened since the war. "A writer should have found his metier before he is 50", he wrote in 1960 to an importunate editor. "After that he reads only for pleasure; not for curiosity about what others are doing." But without curiosity there can be no new experience; and without new experience a creative artist, unless he has the genius to create new worlds every day out of familiar experience, rapidly declines into sterility.

All this was something that Evelyn Waugh quite deliberately brought on himself. He created his persona with dedicated care, as he admitted in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*. "The part for which he cast himself", he wrote there, "was a combination of eccentric dandy and testy colonel, and he acted it strenuously, before his children at Lychpole and his cronies in London, until it came to dominate his whole personality. . . . He offered the world a front of pomposity mitigated by indiscretion, that was as hard, bright and unimportant as a carapace."

These letters, on the whole, show how consistently and effectively he played that part, but there are some that show a deeper humanity. His love letters to his second wife during their courtship are as tender and moving as any in the English language. He wrote to his children with wisdom and affection; and his letters to a few old friends—notably Lady Mary Lygon—sparkled as entertainingly through the 1950s as they had in that infinitely remote decade, the 1930s. But these letters to his close friends are in many respects the saddest of all. He told his son Auberon that he had made all his friends at Oxford or in the Army, but that was not strictly true; many of them came from the Metroland period between the two. Certainly he made no new friends after the war, and his correspondence with his contemporaries chronicles with melancholy but typical ruthlessness the aging and disintegration of the Bright Young People he did so much to make famous, their decline into drunkenness, disease, senility, and all too frequently suicide.

I got an S.O.S. from Baby Jungman to come to Mereworth where Peter Beauty (who was going blind) was in despair. I went. His melancholy had already quite closed in all round him. . . . He had asked a party about as comforting as a cage of parrots—Freda and Bobby, Boofy and Fiona, Baby and Zita. We chattered away and Peter wandered in and out of the room hardly aware of us. . . . Two days later as you probably know Peter killed himself.

Freda and Bobby, Boofy and Fiona, Baby and Zita. What a way to go.

But it was in this cage of parrots that Evelyn Waugh had chosen to pass his life, from Oxford onwards. As with so many of his brilliant and unhappy generation, his time at university was not, as it is with most young people, an adolescent preliminary to a life of ever deepening maturity and enjoyment. Rather it was an experiment of total self-fulfilment to be prolonged if possible throughout life. The party had to go on. Nothing must change. Affectations acquired during those years hardened into dogmas. Friends clung together for mutual comfort in a rapidly changing world in which they refused to adjust. Though rejecting the mores of their parents, they looked back with nostalgia on an age which had vanished while they were still children, and spent their lives trying to escape, from the bleak realities of the new one. They had neither certainties inherited from the past nor hopes for a happier future. They only had one another.

This was the world of Evelyn Waugh, and he had no illusions about it, or about himself. That merciless eye illuminated all it saw with a brilliant and lurid light. Beyond that all was darkness, and soon everything would be darkness. By his own standards he was guilty of two of the deadliest of sins: acidie and despair.

Eton by his own lights Evelyn Waugh was not an attractive figure, but he was an honest and honourable one. The implacable God he worshipped had given him the gift of Faith in abundance, but little Hope, and even less Charity. Rather more of the letter might not have made him a better writer, but it would surely have made him a happier man.

William Makepeace Thackeray's *Book of Snobs by One of Themselves* has been re-issued (162pp. Woking: Gresham Books. £4.95. 0 905418 8 32) with the original illustrations by the author. There are fifty-four chapters on various aspects of snobbery and different kinds of snobs: "The Influence of the Aristocracy on Snobs", "On Some Military Snobs", "Great City Snobs", "On Clerical Snobs and Snubbishness", "On University Snobs", "On Literary Snobs", "Party Giving Snobs", "Dining Out Snobs", "English Snobs on the Continent", "Snobbism Gatherum" and "Club Snobs" are among them.

The monetarist Monk of Dear Bill caught by George Adamson leaving term firms in a flight of fancy.

Number 2 at Number 10

By Ferdinand Mount

RICHARD INGRAMS and JOHN WELLS :
The Collected letters of Denis Thatcher
Illustrated by George Adamson.
80pp. Private Eye/André Deutsch. £1.95.
0 233 97303 6

In this era of economic stringency, it is increasingly rational to find irreplaceable works of scholarship published without proper index or apparatus criticus. This is the case with the collection of letters published under the somewhat catchpenny title of *Dear Bill*, and certain facts about them might therefore to be placed on record as a preliminary to substantive discussion.

The letters originally appeared in the fortnightly humorous magazine, *Private Eye*. They purport to be the letters of the Prime Minister's husband to his old friend and golfing partner Bill—identified, if only by legend, with Mr William Deedes, the former Conservative MP and present Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. At first, it was said, the letters aroused some disquiet in high government circles. The portrait was alleged to be close enough to life to have provoked suspicion of informers. But in truth the fantasy needed little more to go on than the few data already published about its protagonist: an enthusiasm for ball games, robust conservative views, a distaste for public life, a love of good drink, a life spent in the oil industry, and a strong-willed wife. The rest follows.

Those who are obsessed by the belief that the British are obsessed by class may be tempted to see this little work as merely a satire on class differences; a view undeniably supported by such passages as: "Peter Carrington turns out to be a very nice sort of chap, no side whatsoever, and he was at Eton with Sticky Wilkinson, so Sticky tells me, although Carrington didn't remember the name."

However, simply to assign the writer to an upwardly mobile subclass of the managerial bourgeoisie would be to overlook the work's essentially poetic substructure. For these letters are unmistakably elegiac in undertone, and even Proustian, if only by implication, with the mashie-niblick performing in some sense the imaginatively liberating role of the madeleine. They are a lament for lost days at Sandwich and Littlestone. Today, the name of Littlestone—a slightly dilapidated links and its 1920s villas overrun by newer developments—may strike at best a faint chord. And yet it is from this emotional nexus that Denis launches his critique, formidable albeit unsystematic, of the current administration.

From the start, he has doubts about both the men and the measures of the new regime. At the opening of Parliament, he contrasts his lasting aversion to Sir Norman St John Stevas, a leitmotif in those letters: "I was a bit miffed to see M. fussing over that fellow Stevas, and taking the fluff off his collar. To tell you the truth, I don't like the cut of that chap's jib. If you ask me, he's not absolutely 18 per cent, and when I said as much a lot of the fellows at the club agreed." He is dubious too about the Rhodesian strategy; as for the Common Market, "we should never have got mixed up with the bloody thing in the first place". The Cabinet is disconcertingly full of HMIs—"home-made jerries"—every of the many minuscule physical here brought resurrected which make the whole collection an invaluable source-book for the lexicographer. Of the synonyms, some rare, for "intoxicated", I was particularly enchanted by "jolsky whistled", presumably derived from "to wet one's whistle", although not to be found in the Shorter Oxford, and what darling quidity have these letters timed thaved into common speech a variety of otherwise forgotten words for alcoholic refreshment, "tincture", and "lotion" being only the most widespread.

Academic interest need not, however, be confined to the sociologist and the linguist. The profound ambiguities of late capitalism here adumbrated ought to stimulate any economic historian. On the one hand, Denis does rather well out of high interest rates by "clobbering a bit of the current over into the deposit" on the advice of his local NatWest Bank manager. On the other hand, the saga darkens as the credit squeeze begins to take effect. In letters as yet uncollected he writes notes bankruptcies among his friends, many of whom are enterprenurs in somewhat marginal small businesses, such as the manufacture of greenhouses outside Tunbridge Wells.

Here, dare one say, the literary and political modes appear to fuse. The letter-writer betrays the other quality of social sense so central in all self-readers from Pepys to Mr Pooter: he also represents the uncertainty of the typical Conservative constituency association as in the wisdom of doctrinal monetarism.

It is worth pointing out that the predicament of the "real" Mr Thatcher is unique not merely because of his sex but because he is the only Prime Minister's consort in recent times who is also or at any rate used to be an active member of the party in power. *Mrs Wilson's Diary*, by the same authors, was often very funny, but its farcical incidents had to be manufactured because the broad was a non-political person and hence rather detached from the events of the day; she met her husband at a tennis club, while the Thatchers meet at a political meeting. There lies the difference between light humour and committed satire. Ultimately, *Dear Bill* must be classed as a seminal work of intellectual engagement. And it is to be hoped that, despite the recession, the collation and publication of the absorbing correspondence may be prevented to continue.

The master-shipwright

By Russell Davies

ALAN JENKINS :
Stephen Potter: Inventor of Gamesmanship
280pp. Weidenfeld and Nicholson. £8.50.
0 297 77817 X

Stephen Potter books, the funny ones at any rate, turn up quite often in second-hand shops, and it is always worth having a look inside to see whose Christmas they once made Merry. In addition to the standard endearments, some quite surprising messages have been inscribed on the flyleaves of Potter books, usually by nephews panicked by the thought that Auntie would misconstrue Potter's notoriously neticel-behavioural theories as some sort of admonition or threat against herself. It was in search of harmless entertainments of this kind that I was rewarded, a couple of years ago, with a few strokes from the pen of Potter himself. An American edition of *One-Upmanship* (the one whose dustjacket carries the recommendation "*An admirable . . . Christmas . . . present*"—*East Somerset Record*) proved to have been dedicated, in the shocking pink biro of the day (1955), "To R. A. Edwards, for delightful cathedralship, from Stephen Potter". The small pleasurable shock of finding something for nothing proved illusory (the eagle-eyed bookseller had added, in pencil: "Signed. 50p."); it did serve, however, to dislodge from the book two sheets of "official" notepaper, from the "Red House, Ahlebugh, Suffolk" and the Savile Club, upon which the Founder had further conveyed "deep salaams and apologies for delay" to Canon Edwards, who is told that the "delightful compliment" of his book will be returned, and is then offered Potter's "delighted thanks".

If nothing else, these ephemera served to indicate how fond Potter was of expressing his "delight". His biographer now confirms the point:

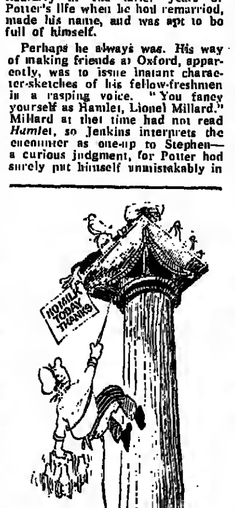
> Alistair Cooke was a regular visitor in London . . . Cooke had recently published a book on Alger Hiss, *A Generation on Trial*. "The first time he came up to my apartment," Alistair Cooke remembers, "he brought me a copy of *Lifemanship* inscribed "To Alistair Cooke . . . (for delightful lifemanship)" from Stephen Potter". "Delightful!" Cooke comments, "is a grisesome choice."

Scarcely a choice at all, it now appears, but a reflex, like the "-manship" coinages themselves. Potter was a man trapped in his own joke. It would be too much to say that the life and the joke grew to be identical, but they certainly became inextricable, one from the other: so Alan Jenkins, in chronicling Potter's life, is to some extent caught up in the unenviable business of furnishing jokes with explanations. His method of avoiding embarrassment is to keep his head down, and his nose pressed into the cuttings book. His judgments on Potter are fleeting and circumstantial, and the way the narrative hurries on gives the book a melancholy air, as though the sense of gradual waste amid the jocularity were a little too painful to be spoken of. But the story remains an interesting one: it deserves to be teased forth from its minutiae.

Stephen Meredith Potter—not a Gotling or a Fann in sight—was born in 1900, the son of an accountant, and lived near Clapham Common. He grew up into the Great War, as it were. The more he understood, the more it seemed to be coming to claim him. He kept a diary, in which he remarked, on his seventeenth birthday: "If this war doesn't end soon I shall have to join the heastly army and lay down my blooming life for my blinking country." Having failed to excel in any way at school, he eventually rushed to meet this horrid fate. He joined the Army, but the war ended just in time. The military life, as far as it had gone, had suited him. Freedom from responsibility had organized him wonderfully. He even passed out top of his company, and got a commission in the Coldstream Guards. This outlasted him to a tiny, and some fun in later life when he was challenged by guardsmen while wearing it. All the same, he was not left with very honourable feelings about the War, particularly when at Oxford he met men who had left their illusions (at the very least) in the trenches.

The Potter family paid for his place at Merton, and this in turn was not good for his self-esteem; for his brilliant sister Muriel had won a scholarship to St Hugh's, had taken a first, and would shortly be one of the youngest headmistresses in England. Her stolidly useful career was a life-long reproach to Stephen, and the reproach was not all in Stephen's mind; Muriel sometimes articulated it, in letters, particularly in the latter years of Potter's life when he had remarried, made his name, and was apt to be full of himself.

Perhaps he always was. His way of making friends at Oxford, apparently, was to issue instant character-sketches of his fellow-freshmen in a rasping voice. "You fancy yourself as Hamlet, Lionel Millard." Millard at that time had not read *Hamlet*, so Jenkins interprets the encounter as one-up to Stephen—a curious judgment, for Potter had surely put himself unmistakably in the wrong, and Millard had unwittingly conceived a masterly Reverse Well-Readship ploy, decades in advance of the codification of such things. (Both men were reading English.) Potter achieved a second-class degree, and an interview with the BBC in the person of its chief administrator, Admiral Carpendale. He was offered the job of talks producer in Birmingham at £8 a week, but turned down the opportunity. The unacceptable factor was Birmingham: Jenkins states, astonishingly, that "not for another seventeen years would Stephen visit any provincial city". If this is true, it is certainly the most extraordinary fact of Potter's life—almost inexplicable when one considers the unusual curiosity which sustained Potter in his exploration of literature, history, flora, fauna, and sport. (Another odd fact arising from the BBC near-miss is that Potter, in Jenkins's estimation, never earned as much as £8 a week until the outbreak of the Second World War.)



Up the pole with Nelson, or, "I Live In Trafalgar Square (The Optimistic Outcast)", from Stanley Holloway's More Monologues and Songs, edited by Michael Marshall and illustrated by Bill Tidy 177pp. Elm Tree Books/EMI Publishing. £2.25 paperback. 0 241 10478 5.) It would be improper to let the nineties birthday of the great entertainer, monologuist and lyricist pass without a tribute from the TLS and we salute the man who has immortalized, among so many others, the tramp who makes his home opposite the National Gallery: "There's money a swell up in Park Lane tonight/ Who'd be glad if he only had my appetite . . .".

A shapeless period followed. Potter started it by putting a small ad in *The Times*: "Cockney accoste cured. Apply Box 1234." This foray into Higginsian therapy produced one client. Potter moved on, to a variety of tutorships, lectureships, and even a private-secretaryship. It is conceivable that he returned to "ships" in later life because his mind associated them with the security of employment. Courtship was shortly added to the list, and Potter married an artist called Mary Attenborough ("Act") in what seems to have been 1927. (Mr Jenkins is very considerate with months but sometimes leaves the years out.) A baby was followed by a novel, bearing possibly the worst title any first novel has ever dared to put before the public: *The Young Man*. The following year, 1930, Potter's *D. H. Laureence: A First Study*, represented a distinct recovery, but Lawrence died at the wrong moment, and Potter's short book was left looking like an inadequate memorial. There was also an unfortunate misprint, transforming "Sea and Sardinia" into "Sex and Sardinia", an error which gossip soon amplified into "Sex and Sardinas"—not disgracefully out of place, but not calculated to please a striving writer.

Potter established, in the 1930s, a small cottage industry based on Coleridge and his intimates, and topped that off with *The Muse in Chains*, a rather extraordinary and liberating book designed to attack all dynastic or league-table systems of evaluating and teaching English literature. It's a book that made in an outspoken way some of the points about academic life that were later read into the obliquenesses of Lifemanship, too. Altogether it deserves a better salute from Mr Jenkins than a survey of the reviews, introduced by the revelation that Jenkins himself read and enjoyed the book when it first came out.

It was now that Potter's "very often jocular" style, pointed out with no enthusiasm by the *TLS* of those days, began to be of more regular use to Potter. He began to contribute scripts to BBC schools' programmes in the mid-1930s, and it was inevitable that the Corporation should eventually take him on as a writer/producer without even threatening him with Birmingham. Potter, it proved, had a natural gift for devising that thing which the BBC steadfastly (and quite rightly) refuses to define, the "Feature". Described very loosely, it is the radio equivalent of the lecture lecture, with novel slides, and some sort of narrative momentum. Potter's "Guide to the Thames" was an immediate classic of the genre, snippety but flowing. It brought out the impressionist in Potter.

In a wider sense, the BBC was an ideal place for Potter to be. As a lone author with many affluent and influential friends (he joined the Savile Club in 1937), Potter could have easily grown into that least likeable of men, the embittered, middle-aged snob. Instead, the BBC provided him with a parallel club, offering Civil Service discipline, creative companionship, and the daily exercise of craftsmanlike standards. He repaid its hospitality by eroding, very usefully, the barriers between information and entertainment, instruction and pleasure. His programmes were splendidly uncategorizable. As for internal BBC life, it is impossible now to say how much influence he exerted on it. Certainly there are still BBC veterans to be seen paddling the corridors with fag-ash epaulettes and a pointed face, in the Potter style. Only last week on Broadcasting House, the Head of Something offered me a drink from a bottle marked, with a printed label, "Good ordinary claret". Probably it was always like this, and Potter just walked into it. Quite a lot of it walked out again, into the Lifemanship series, whose tactics are derived just as often from departmental or office politics as from The Club or the Golf Course.

After an ideal run-up through the "How" series on radio (devised with Joyce Grenfell), Potter brought out *The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship* in 1947, and his public reputation was made. The series continued healthily through the 1950s (a time when Potter was additionally famous for the Schweppshire series of advertisements), then ran out of puff in the 1960s. Whether fame did Potter harm it is not easy to find from this account at least, since his rise to prominence coincides with the break-up of his marriage to Att. His worst moment occurred at the bridge table. Potter to distinguished lady civil servant partner: "Why can't you keep your —ing mouth shut?" The weekend broke up forthwith, and no wonder. This, from the famous exponent of the elegant riposte, must have been appallingly shocking. But there were less understandable lapses, like the one remembered by the countryman-broadcaster Jack Hargreaves, who attempted to contribute to a Savile Club conversation between Potter and Sir Arthur Bliss. "Not really your subject, old boy, is it?" said Potter.

He continued to play games relentlessly—golf and tennis whenever possible. The subject of semi-serious social games, played between men in that locked-horns, friendship-cementing way, is a large one, and probably a deep one, too. It is clear that some of *Gamesmanship* and its outdoor successors were taken down, unadorned, from life; and that once the joke had reached the public domain, Potter was not short of "delightful" suggestions for its further expansion. Some of the contributions he received were by no means marginal. For example, his original subtitle to *Gamesmanship* was "How to Win Games without Cheating". It was Francis Meynell who suggested the insertion of "Actually" before "Cheating". (And "Actually" is actually the joke.)

I imagine the most exultedly one-up thing Potter ever did in his life was to marry Heather Jennar, the marriage expert, to whom he appears to have been rhapsodically devoted. (The biography, like Potter, rather leaves Att in the lurch.) Between the two marriages, and indeed in Att's time, there had been sundry "flirtations" involving Potter's self-flattering habit of squiring beautiful and intelligent young ladies to galleries and restaurants. He had became, for a while, old before his time, a parody clubman after the manner of the Petar Arno cartoons. But "H" solved this problem permanently, so that Potter's only remaining worries in life were health and money, which gradually ran out in the same agonizingly trickling way. His earning capacity was quite definitely limited, during his last fifteen years—as his publishers noted—by the difficulty he found in escaping from his Lifemanship style of writing. His unit had always been the headed paragraph (which radio found ideal) but now he could not escape the instructional tone. Even *Potter in America*, an interesting diary, sometimes gives way to ploy-spotting activities. Possibly he was happiest at this time when combining his letter-day saleability with his genuine educational aptitude, on the lecture-tour circuit. A headline turned up by Jenkins from the *Washington Post*—"POTTER TOUGH: WHAT A BORE) STARTS ON ANOTHER LECTURE TOUR"—suggests that his touch was no more unfailing here than in his book-inscriptions, but the ease with which he made friends in America, once kindled Pottership there, implies that Washington was unlucky (and the press-cutting technique unkind).

Almost nothing is left of Pooterdom. By the time he died in 1965 Gamesmanship had come to mean "cheating without being penalized" and not at all what the Founder intended—and the life from which it had sprung, in the oddly intense leisure hours of clubbable people, had presumably returned to the golf course with relief. It seems amazing now that such a slim paradistic repertoire (if a psychologically acute one) should take over a thinking man's life completely; but even today it is possible for intellectual careers to shrink into music-hall turns. Potter's was funny, thank goodness, and it suited his nature: all his life he had taken delight in moving in upon a system—any system, from the rudest corps to Savile Club snooker—and becoming its official exponent and legislator. It is revealing that the one sphere in which he argued against such a princess was the sphere of English Literature. In this he showed himself an individual whose mind was broader than his instincts. His self-career deserves better than a paste book commemoration.

Publicizing the private

By Jennifer Uglow

ESTELLE C. JELINEK (Editor)
Women's Autobiography
Essays in Criticism
274pp. Indiana University Press. £15. (£6 paperback).
0 253 19193 9

Can autobiography be criticized as a unified genre when so many of its authors seek judgment, not on their ability as writers but on their personalities, achievements, period, ideas? Again, is it permissible to lump together "women's autobiography" as a separate sub-genre, whose development and contemporary form is somehow determined primarily by the gender of its subject-author? The danger of such an approach is illustrated by this collection of essays, which reduces a rich diversity of material to a narrow selection chosen to fit a preconceived model of what women's autobiography is or should be.

Critical attitudes are important, for any simple question about autobiographies turns out to have a complex answer. Why are they written? Why are they read? How do women's differ from men's? Certainly women are renowned diarists and perhaps a lack of defined public roles has, in the past, increased the attraction of the struggle to record and order events, thoughts and feelings. Private though it is, the activity lends off a sense of anonymousness, draws a line around the writer's experience and allows the manufacture of a sense of self, or rather selves. The internal division into writer/subject/reader gives an illusory control over the raw material of life.

The move to public autobiography suggests more complicated motives and is particularly interesting in women, who for so long were not expected to assert their own importance. Early autobiographies tend to come from women whose style of life rendered them "public" persons in different ways: members of Puritan confessional sects like Joan Vukins, whose *God's Mighty Power Magnified* dates from 1691; leisured aristocratic women like Lady Mary Wortley Montague; courtesans and actresses such as George Anne Bellamy, whose splendid *Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy, Late of Covent-Garden Theatre. Written by Herself*, was published in 1785.

Many of these early published lives are spirited, detailed accounts coloured by a strong sense of individual personality, yet they usually appear with a disclaimer as to the unworthiness of the author. The most common reason for writing is given as "duty" or "conscience", a manner of subordinating the person to a driving ideal which derives from the autobiographies of religious converslon. The origins remain visible in the imagery of Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*, written in 1855: "I cannot but acknowledge that philosophy has opened my way before me, and given a staff into my hand, and thrown a light upon my path, so as to have long delivered me from doubt and fear." And the feeling that one should write about oneself for principles rather than for personal satisfaction still permeates later books by eminent women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Eighty Years and More*, Emmeline Pankhurst's *My Own Story* (1914) and (more recently) Golda Meir's *My Life* (1975).

Yet the desire to record a part in a campaign or cause does not necessitate the dwarfing of the individual by the public panorama. Although there may be a tension between outer achievement and inner uncertainty, it seems strange to suggest, as Patricia Meyer Spacks does in one of the essays in *Women's Autobiography*, that women like Emma Goldman and Dorothy Day, who produced such highly personal books as *Living My Life* and *The Long Loneliness*, are using autobiography "paradoxically, partly as a mode of self denial".

Self-examination and indeed self-assertion often combine powerfully with accounts of a public career; as for example in *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* and in Margaret Mead's *Blackberry Winter*. And a number of vivid British autobiographies have been written for "impersonal" reasons. Vera Brittain, in her introduction to *Testament of Youth*, describes how she felt herself to be writing on behalf of a whole generation of women whose lives had been drastically affected by the First World War; Hannah Mitchell's *The Hard Way Up* gives an account of the suffragette movement and socialism from the perspective of her rural working-class background; Dora Russell's *The Tamarisk Tree* manages to combine activist fervour with considerable personal frankness. The tradition still thrives; *Hindsight* by Charlotte Wolff, psychotherapist and campaigner for sexual freedom, was published in September. This month Virago are bringing out the autobiography of the New Zealand educationist Sylvia Ashton-Warner, *I Passed This Way*.

The supreme modern woman autobiographer is surely Simone de Beauvoir, who traces the strands of her intellectual and emotional development within a broad tapestry of the major political events and moral debates of this century. De Beauvoir holds our attention through her books, yet *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* receives only a passing mention in these essays, because it does not fit the model.

The suggestion in *Women's Autobiography* is that such writing, which places women in a wide context, is somehow not true female, let alone feminist, autobiography, and that in the United States authors have progressed beyond it to use the form for what Estelle Jelinek considers more "self-validating reasons". Suzanne Juhasz reminds us of Virginia Woolf's comment that many memoirs fail because they omit their subject altogether, "They say, 'This is what happened'; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened". Yet the paradox of the shy self-publicist still persists in the most contemporary American writing. Here, in fine Whitmen tradition, the shouldering "duty" is to an ideal of self-analysis which supposedly transcends the personal, and illuminates a general experience—being black, or being a woman—in a way which "helps" both author and reader. The private therapy of the diary is elevated to public relevance.

This kind of autobiography seems influenced by the tradition of confessional novels. Fiction has long been used by women to cloak personal experience, acting both as a private release, as Jean Rhys explains in her autobiography *Smile, Please*, and as a device enabling authors to speak out about aspects of their lives and those of other women which would cause an outcry if described in the first person—sex, abortion, resentment of family ties, lesbianism. (Three classic examples from different cultures are Alexandra Kollontai's *The Love of Worker Bees*, Shulhi Alexme's *The Woman* and Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth*.) It is interesting that Kate Millett, in *Flying*, should quote one of the most influential of these novels, *The Golden Notebook*. Doris Lessing's discovery that "the most hopelessly private" moments turned out to be those when she spoke for most women becomes the justification for the reader's total immersion in the endless trivia of Millett's daily life. The novel gives greater freedom but it also imposes tighter discipline.

The search for adequate expression of the inner life has led to some interesting variations in form, and the inner part of this critical collection focuses upon experiments in the work of Gertrude Stein, Lillian Hellman, Anais Nin and in more recent autobiographical writing, especially Kate Millett's *Flying* and Sin, Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Maxine Hong Kingston's highly stylized *The Woman Warrior*. Several essays try to develop criteria for describing and evaluating female life-writing. This attempts reveal a common difficulty facing feminist critics: the fact that in developing definitions they so often have to start with reactive and negative elements. Definitions invariably start by positing a masculine model as a norm which, it is implied, is both inadequate for women to use and inherently unsound because of the values it embodies.

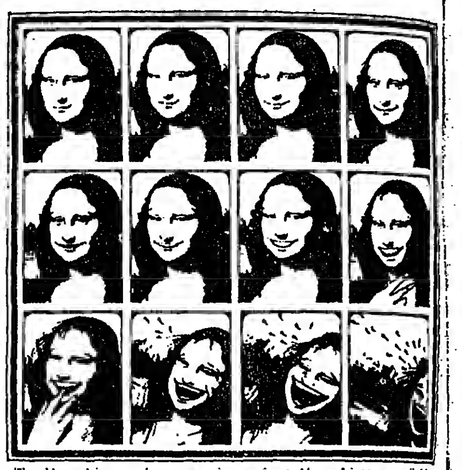
In this case the generalized model presents male autobiography as straightforwardly chronological, concentrating on the paternal influence of the father and ignoring the mother entirely, emphasizing public achievement and minimizing family and emotional ties. Above all it is said to concentrate on the significance of events rather than presenting the complex figure-like message of the whole context. In opposition, women's autobiography supposedly tends to be irregular, to use varied techniques (narrative, diary, letter, anecdote), to emphasize the role of female relatives and to replace the vanishing of personal triumph by delicate "sincere" analysis. The contrasting patterns are taken to reflect "man's primary socialization towards achieving the goal of a successful career", while the women's lives "show less a pattern of linear development towards some clear goal than one of repetitive, cumulative, cyclical structure".

It seems strange to deny a discursive male confessional mode when the tradition of spiritual, romantic and sexual autobiography stretches from St Augustine through Rousseau down to Henry Miller. Such a hopelessly general diagnosis collapses when one examines individual works in their literary and social settings. It may illuminate one or two individual (American) works but it simply cannot be accepted as a satisfying methodology for feminist criticism of autobiography as a whole.

For a feminist (academic critic or not) three things are immediately worrying about this carelessly conceived approach. First, it assumes an inherent "female mode" of perception—common to all women no matter what the material conditions of their life—which embraces the irrational and anti-logical and turns its back on the public arena (who needs enemies?). Second, it seems a prescriptive rather than merely diagnostic model. When we are asked to accept that "women derive a sense of feminine political form from their biological connections with each other", there is an implication that such intensely private writing is what women "ought" to be doing. The shared experience of period pains becomes at least as important as a shared fight against oppressive legislation and social attitudes.

Third, the insistence on finding this general pattern leads to critical concentration on a narrow range of works, and blurs that important and vital discussion of the relationship between feminist autobiography and women's autobiography as a whole. The exploration of self and the examination of the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of individuals will always be at the heart of some types of literature and there are times when such writing represents a courageous advance. But it is dangerous to turn the virtues of confessional literature into an aesthetic and political creed.

The current interest in women's autobiography, it becomes clear, has more to do with the ideologies of sexual politics and consciousness-raising than with critical recognition of a neglected body of literature. Despite the interest in form, this volume is curiously free of any recognition of the literary context of the developing genre. The relationship between autobiography and some types of fiction remains unexplored, and there is no considera-



The Mona Lisa cracks up—a picture from Mona Lisas, compiled by Mary Rose Storey, with an introduction by David Bourdon (96pp illustrated. £3.50. 0 8109 2104 4). Advertisements, ashtrays, bulges, bath calendars, candles, ceramics, cigarette boxes, clocks, crayon fans, deodorant black holders, drying-up cloths . . . La Giaconda has been raped, distorted, mocked and mutilated ever since the fifteenth century. Earlier painters mainly restricted themselves to embracing her in the manner shown Marcel Duchamp bearded her in the but was with "L.H.O.O.Q." in 1919. Andy Warhol held that "50 Are Better Than One" in 1963; since then she's been mass-produced a million-fold. "Mingritta Lisa", "Moto Lisa", "Lulu Lisa", "Headless Mona Lisa", "Mona Gorilla", "Big Mona", "Mona Lisamouse", "Bandaged Mona Lisa", "Cross-eyed Mona Lisa", "Mona Lisa Smashed"—no one can leave her alone. Mona Lisas has 114 illustrations, including sixteen plates in full colour; one of them is a picture by Leonardo da Vinci.

Pen in Mouth

I keep them in my pockets while I write this
with the ball-point gripped between my teeth.
For weeks now they've been training for something;
I suspect they're sneaking out at night while I'm asleep
because I find them lying pale and exhausted
on either side of me when I woke in the morning.
For the rest of the day their slow clop
follows me about the house. I know I can't hold them
much longer and one morning I'll find them gone;
they will have washed themselves of me forever.
Then, I know, there will be news of sightings;
of a pair of blanched crabs moving steadily inland,
or the white imposter frogs who have cheated
some poor princess into kisses which changed nothing,
or ten pink honey Dachshunds clearing whole pavements
with the splintering trot of their unkempt nails,
or wearing some stolen bishop's ring like a swollen red knuckle,
proffering it in bars and massage parlours,
or simply, nakedly, themselves at last
spotted on some morning doorstep strangling milk bottles.
The time is gone when they could be kept to myself.
There—now I'll creep to my desk and type this with my nose.

Christopher Hope

The descent into the untestable

By Anita Brookner

ROBERT HARBISON:
Deliberate Regression
264pp. André Deutsch. £8.95.
0 233 97273 0

Those who are unwilling or unable to accept the fact that the wicked flourish like the green bay trees and who seek to identify some original fault which may account for this distressing phenomenon, more keenly evident in the twentieth century than in any other, will delight in the thesis put forward by Robert Harbison in this boldly produced, badly written, and undeniably brilliant book. But first of all, those to whom the book will be meat and drink must accept the fact that it is written at two distinct turns of speed. The preface, which runs down the main argument (of which more later), gives the impression of having been set forth in all its innocent pugnacity as a synopsis for an interested editor or as an application for a scholarship, or both. The text itself, which purports to illustrate the points made in the preface, appears to have been written some years later, for the style, which veers from the crepuscular to the opaque, is different, and the argument alternately tenses and sags under the weight of the complicated centuries whose progression—or regression—the author chronicles. It is to Mr Harbison's great credit that he manages to sum himself up at the end. But in his end is not quite his beginning.

It is Mr Harbison's contention that in the eighteenth century certain painters and writers functioned a deliberate regression, presumably away from reason and the testing of hypotheses, in favour of those areas of consciousness which cannot be tested: the making of new myths, whose outcome would be a new transcendence. This enterprise which, after disparate beginnings, gained strength and adherents, came to be known as the Romantic Movement, in which, it was hoped, ways would be found out of the dilemma of consciousness would be found in primitivism, pantheism, syncretism, and the insidious detachment of meaning from image or sound or word. Ultimately, the original signification of such images and words would be lost, hypotheses would no longer be tested or susceptible to the process of testing, and the desire for transcendence, which is permanent and endemic to the human species, could be manipulated and attached to more useful concepts like racial purity or indeed the need for permanent revolution.

Mr Harbison simplifies and strengthens his argument by basing it on certain preselected works of art, although he omits a great many examples which might point in the opposite direction. If one follows his line of thinking, it will seem obvious that Neoclassicism is responsible for the Third Reich, that the festivals of the Revolution of 1789 provided the inspiration for the Nuremberg Rallies, and that the warring plants in Oceien antiquate out only Wagner but the heroic, unfocused, and over life-sized statues of Soviet workers armed with hammers and sickles, instruments which would surely be obsolete in the new collectivist millennium.

It is an argument familiar to most critics of Romanticism. But Mr Harbison's theme of regression, which he states without any reference to psychoanalytical theory, enables him to cast his nets wider. He differs from the normal run of historians by pronouncing the anathema rather earlier than we would expect. He starts, in fact, with Watteau, whose fantasies he finds deeply sinister, and along with Watteau he lodges his pupil and his descendant, Boucher and Fragonard, two painters of a very different stamp, who transplanted Watteau's original idiom into a lazy and mindless repetition of shorthand patterns for youth and irresponsibility.

This descent into infantilism, says Mr Harbison, is where it all began to go wrong. But even those who doubt the ability of Watteau, Boucher, and Fragonard to influence the main currents of European thinking, will surely note the differences, as opposed to the similarities, in their styles. Watteau, low-born, tubercular, a drifter from Flanders, had been denied access to the main traditions of mythological and allegorical painting by the very paucity of his training; he was therefore predisposed to accept the idiom with which he was presented by his masters Gillot and Audran, out of which he fashioned a fairly melancholy world of high-class nomads, slightly overdressed, in settings visibly adapted from stage backdrops. The young pouting faces to which Mr Harbison objects are more noticeable in the paintings than in the drawings because Watteau was a better draughtsman than he was a painter: a drawing of a woman's face by Watteau will display signs of weary middle age which, when translated on to canvas by his notoriously dirty brush, will become blank and doll-like.

Boucher, it is true, shows a deplorable (but quite harmless) tendency to see his characters as about fourteen years old, but even this tendency derived from Watteau's reductions, for Boucher was one of the artists employed to engrave Watteau's entire work, and in the process of engraving the original subtleties became mechanized to a far more considerable degree. It should also be remembered that Boucher had a deep dislike of nature and refused to work from the model. His extreme facility with the brush expected to Fragonard, more truly gifted, made capable of ardour, and when Fragonard became Boucher's pupil he adopted his idiom uncritically. It is true that there are correct elements in Fragonard, but not enough to make him bear the weight of subsequent history.

The only significant error (error being the eighteenth-century equivalent of Mr Harbison's regression) propagated by the age of reason arose out of the need to provide a secular alternative for good-hearted and right-thinking non-believers: the myth of the excellence of the classical past. This was largely the creation of Winckelmann who pleaded his case in terms so incantatory that some of his arguments are still persuasive even today. For Winckelmann, the ancient world was a repository of wise laws, good government, and, above all, physical beauty. Greece was peopled by athletes seven feet tall, marble white, and genuinely adolescent. There were, of course, no Greek women. Ancient Rome was thought to be a city of bleached white fragments, although in its heyday it must have looked rather more like the Oxford Street facade of Selfridges. The inhabitants of these cities and their provinces were thought to possess the secrets of living beautifully and dying well, propositions overwhelmingly attractive to those without faith in the supernatural: now it was then. Winckelmann's error was to persuade himself that one might possess those secrets by "imitating" the ways of the Greeks and the Romans as perceived through their artefacts and by trying to resemble them as closely as possible.

To persuade himself was not difficult; when it came to persuading others, Winckelmann's system, while retaining a remarkable surface unity, became deeply flawed by the residual beliefs and disembodied energies of its various proponents. Jacques-Louis David's "Oath of the Horatii" and "Death of Socrates", which are cited, represent the only moment of stasis achieved by a purely secular, physical, and masculine ethic in an attempt to abolish the laxness, self-indulgence, and feminization of artistic symbols brought about by those very artists whom Mr Harbison has already castigated. The style of the "Horatii" can be labelled fascist, but only if it is possible to discount David's own fantasies of strength and steadfastness, qualities which he himself did not possess. Nevertheless, Neoclassical agitprop can be seen to have influenced the behaviour of certain extremists of the French Revolution, notably Saint-Just, as well as the physical appearance of its festivals.

But if the eighteenth century was when it all went wrong, Mr Harbison omits to say that this was the last time when it all might just have come out right. To leave out of one's calculations Montesquieu and Diderot and Goethe, none of them afflicted with any beliefs they could not verify, and to weight the argument instead with Fragonard, Winckelmann, and David, is to misunderstand the limitations of art. Artistic traditions are self-generating and at best reflexive. One cannot live by the light of ideas expressed in pictures, although their images will colour one's thinking. A painter can give us an image of old age which will capture the poignancy of faded eyes and scanned flesh, but a painter will not be able to pass on the kind of last message left by Montesquieu: that if he were to be given his time again he would concentrate on keeping warm in the winter and eating ices in the summer. Quite simply, a different kind of information is being imparted. Pictures occasionally need the corroboration of the written word, which Mr Harbison is willing to supply in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but not to any great extent in the eighteenth.

Indeed, if the painted evidence demonstrates one kind of truth about the eighteenth century, it must be stated that the written evidence demonstrates quite another. In 1756 Mme du Deffand wrote to Voltaire, "M. de Voltaire, vous combattez et détruisez toutes les erreurs, mais que mettez-vous à leur place?". She meant that once Voltaire had shown the religion was erroneous (or regressive) there would be no opportunity for her to use those faculties which could only be satisfied by pious observance and the need for belief, however irrational. The dangers of reason were noted by La Mettrie, in his treatise, *De la Folie*: "On arrive à consulter que plus on gagnera du côté de l'esprit, plus on perdra du côté de l'instinct." Reason and emotion, the two polarities by which the eighteenth century measured its progress—and both were thought to be equally useful—are abundantly evident in all the writings of Diderot, the tutelary genius of this particular argument.

By the same token, it is a mistake to suppose, as Mr Harbison does, that David, in the "Oath of the Horatii", is deficient in either one of these qualities. It is a passionate picture, but passionate in the sense in which Diderot's ideal actor was passionate: able to conceive of the role in a frenzy and to perform it with total control. The "Oath of the Horatii" certainly encapsulates a myth, but it is a myth about David himself, a myth of self-mastery. And although control in the European movement of Neoclassicism, it contains a myth which David himself was forced to abandon. While the painted image continues to exert its strength, the reality behind it is subject to change. This is what the picture does not and cannot tell us of its own accord.

For there is a truth even more terrible than Mr Harbison supposes and it was discovered by certain members of the Romantic generation. The truth is this: reason does not work any better than myth. Eighteenth-century optimism, reflected in images as various as Fragonard's "Portraits de Fantaisie" or David's "Death of Socrates", was founded on the precept that reason would bring about change (for the better, needless to say). The Revolution of 1789 was undertaken with this in mind. The year 1789 was the moment when reason and faith were one. By 1791 the moment had passed. By 1793 it had become a nightmare, and David was painting the "Death of Marat" rather than more Horatii. The thinking men of Paris, friends and descendants of the philosophes, had somehow to accommodate the knowledge that a new method had been devised—by one of their own party. Collot d'Herbois—for disposing of opponents and nuisances: their live bodies could be tied to corpses and the whole parcel thrown into the river. Death would ensue, very slowly. This noyade was all the rage in Lyons, just as heads, with tongues hanging out, paraded on pikes were a common sight in Paris. As Alfred de Musset said, in 1836, "Ne cherchez pas ailleurs le secret de nos maux".

Musset spoke for the generation denied the chance of fighting with and for Napoleon, the generation trained for a mythical future and condemned to an unsatisfactory present. The despair of the Romantics at the failure of both faith and reason is ignored by Mr Harbison, who prefers his regression unhampered by thought and finds it in the mythologies of Blake, Runge, and Friedrich. He is confronted in his beliefs, magnificently, by the outpourings of Ruskin and Wagner, both of whom were, by eighteenth-century standards, insane. In *De la Folie*, La Mettrie lists, quite symptomatically, those attributes of madness which were to become a Romantic way of life: melancholia, irritability, lassitude, alienation, a belief in the numinous, a tendency to vatic pronouncements. He describes this unhappy state as "le délire sans fièvre". In the eighteenth century lunatics were thought to be the victims of bad luck. In the nineteenth century they were perceived as victims of history, and Mr Harbison might have cited Delacroix, who was fully aware of this dilemma and who found all mythologies a cause for tragic rumination, as one who did not succumb to the lure of regression.

Indeed Mr Harbison weights his argument rather tendentiously by ignoring the main body of Romantic writing, by ignoring the attempts of those, like Baudelaire, who tried to fashion a new code of ethics out of the contemplation of works of art, a myth too uncomfortably grounded in the bedrock of traditional morality to succeed. Perversely he also ignores any successful Parnassian attempt to live by aesthetics alone. It is hardly fair, though undeniably persuasive, to concentrate on the Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites, regressive to a man, without mentioning the Impressionists and their almost eighteenth-century delight in the here and now. Nor, to be sure, would it be fair to discuss the Impressionists without noting the deliberate regression of the Fauves, painters whom Mr Harbison ignores in favour of primitivism and Picasso's discovery of African sculpture. But to indicate what has been left out is to demand another book, and that book, ideally, should be written by Mr Harbison himself. He is an important and unusual commentator on a subject of enduring interest.

I cannot follow him any further because my range is not so great as his. I think however, that his argument dissolves, and that the attempt to create myths becomes more threadbare, until we arrive at the bankruptcy of the Third Reich, which, ironically, is the only moment in history when the myth-making apparatus ever worked on a grand scale. To cite particular instances, I think he is unjust to William Morris, who is not quite in the same category as Pugin and Burges: even the prospect of having the same curtain material all over England does not make Morris's vision entirely laughable. I think that he concentrates too hard on Kandinsky and not hard enough on Picasso, whose regression really is deliberate and can be seen to be deliberate. I think he is wilful in avoiding the subject of abstract painting, into which one can read the significance of one's choice. But having inveighed against his style, I must redress the balance and say that in many occasions his words are most marvellously right. Listening to Wagner, he experiences "a Gorgantuan pulsation like seasickness". Reflecting on Kandinsky, he notes, "When the transformation of Kandinsky's pictures begins in 1909 the forms gradually lose their shapes, like sweets in a bath of hot liquid". He says of Burne-Jones, "He seeks a past without the trivial and reachable individuality of a year attached to it, like an address one could go to". He refers to "purplish Nineties" and "And I shall remember his beautiful phrase about "not-quite-relinquished hopes of transcendent coherence".

Mr Harbison supposes that we are living at the end of the world and to judge by our present inability to create new myths he is probably right. He is extremely angry about this and anxious to lay the blame on those who have failed to set the machine of history correctly and have preferred the comfort of illusion and the sustaining mystery of faith. Like Alfred de Musset, he groans under the weight of a message inheritance. But if myth-making leads to regression—and my descent into the past can to a certain extent be read as deliberate regression—we may be in a healthier state than we suppose. If the Apocalypse is really just around the corner the correct attitude would seem to be one of lively curiosity. After all, those who believe in the original myth are promised a new Heaven and a new earth. Those who do not might sign off, like Diderot, with the words, "Vivant, j'agis et réagis en masse . . . mort, j'agis et réagis en imbécile. . . . Naître, vivre, et passer, c'est changer de forme". We shall see. Or perhaps not, as the case may be.

In the imperial context

By Stephen Koss

JOHN BARNES and DAVID NICHOLSON (Editors):
The Leo Amery Diaries
Volume 1 1896-1929
653pp. Hutchinson. £27.50.
0 09 131910 2

In 1953, two years before his death, Leopold ("Leo") Amery published the first of three volumes of political memoirs; he did not live to complete a fourth. "When I begin on this first instalment of reminiscences I had to ask myself what it was that I wanted to do", he declared at the very outset. An elementary question, it is one that every author—and editor—might logically put to himself. How would those responsible for the present enterprise have answered it?

Commissioned by Julian Amery, who has supplied a preface and a biographical sketch of his father, this project was conceived on an imperial scale, wholly appropriate to its subject. Initially, Julian Amery had intended to undertake the assignment himself, partly as an act of filial piety and partly as a sort of sequel to his epic work on Joseph Chamberlain. Hard pressed by his own parliamentary responsibilities, he eventually decided to delegate "the task of selection and commentary" to John Barnes and David Nicholson, whose credentials he glowingly commends. To them, he gave "broad guidance" as well as access to the file boxes that fill his basement in Eaton Square.

At last, after prolonged and inexplicable delays, Barnes and Nicholson have brought forth a flawed and cumbersome edition of Leo Amery's private writings in the period from 1896 to 1929; a second and concluding volume is scheduled to appear "in late 1980". As Amery kept his diary only "spasmodically" until 1917, when it became "his usual practice to dictate the entries daily", the editors were obliged to supplement the extracts from his journal with letters to family, colleagues, and friends. Thus *The Leo Amery Diaries* is both more and less than its title implies.

On its own terms, the book represents an uneasy compromise, making it difficult to appreciate the purpose it has been designed to serve. Given its exorbitant price and weight of indigestible detail, it cannot be expected to attract a general readership. The explanatory passages, printed in such a way as to be virtually indistinguishable from the documentary portions, fail to provide either an adequate framework or sustained continuity. Because Amery did not write his diary for ultimate publication, but rather as raw material from which he quarried his public testimony, he did not usually take the trouble to explain himself fully, even to corroborate incidental facts.

It may very well be true, as Julian Amery was advised, that these encyclopedic entries "constitute what is probably the fullest day-by-day record of the period compiled by any British public figure of the first rank". Yet they require elaboration and sometimes emendation to realize their potential value, especially for the early decades, when Amery did not yet qualify as a "public figure of the first rank". Many episodes remain confusing without recourse to *My Political Life*, in which the same ingredients are quoted or paraphrased. For the sake of intelligibility, no less than that of objectivity, Amery's version should be read in conjunction with recent monographs by A. M. Gollin, Alan Sykes, and John Ramsden, among others.

On the other hand, scholars are likely to prove more tantalized than satisfied by the effort. Inevitably, despite its massive proportions, it is far from comprehensive. Amery was a prolific correspondent, and certain key professional exchanges are ignored here. Anyone who is pursuing research in the area of modern British political history will wish to consult the whole diary, estimated to comprise some forty volumes, in addition to the Amery letters that survive in scattered manuscript collections. The image of a long and clamorous queue on Julian Amery's doorstep in Belgravia inspires the hope that he will soon transfer the complete archive to more accessible quarters.

Scholars who have consulted the diary may regret, but cannot justifiably dispute, the criteria on which Barnes and Nicholson have based their selection. Amery, his distinction as a journalist notwithstanding, did not shine in this capacity. Lacking the sophisticated introspection of Harold Nicolson or the jolly impudence of "Chips" Channon, which made him a more serious politician than either, he turned his phrases more elegantly elsewhere. The editors cannot be faulted, of course, for Amery's unremitting didacticism, the result of the intensity with which he waged battles over national policy. But they must take the blame for an assortment of inexcusable errors, which detract from the ventura and impair its usefulness.

If the thing was worth doing, it was worth doing properly. Implicit contradictions, such as Amery's youthful affiliation with Leonard Courtney (known to his jingo critics as "the Prince of Pro-Boers") and the vicissitudes of his relationship with F. E. Smith, demand explication.

Thus enough, Amery and Smith were contemporaries at Oxford; but Smith, unlike Amery, was never elected to a Fellowship at All Souls, a slight that sleeply rankled. The biography of Lord Randolph Churchill ("an impossible person") which Amery read in September 1906 was surely the one written by Winston; it had been published nine months previously and not, as the editors state, "the following year". L.T. Hobhouse was never "a Liberal MP", and Donald Maclean's name is misspelt in the text. Amid the confusion at the outbreak of the First World War, it is perhaps understandable that Amery should have written on August 4 that he wished to apply "further pressure . . . to put Kitchener in Haldane's place" at the War Office. Barnes and Nicholson, who ought to know better, incorrectly point out that "Kitchener was not appointed Secretary of State for War in place of Haldane until August 6". Rumour, far from being contradicted, is thereby seemingly confirmed.

Occasionally, but all too infrequently, the editors helpfully interpolate the full name of an individual to whom Amery referred by a nickname or simply by a surname. "Robbie" is uniformly identified as Geoffrey Dawson, though he remained Geoffrey Robinson through much of this period. There is confusion between H. A. Gwynne, successively editor of the *Standard* and the *Morning Post*, and Rupert Gwynne, the Unionist MP. While it can be logically assumed that the former was the Gwynne whom Amery urged "to write as strongly as he could" on July 31, 1914, there is no reference to this telephone conversation under either Gwynne in the index. Obviously, the "Cook" who debated Far Eastern policy with Lord Milner over dinner at Brooks's was Sir Joseph, the Australian statesman, not (as the extract suggests) an intruder from the kitchen. Pages after Amery records an encounter with "Wake and Studd", who sound like an equestrian breeding service, the item is revealed as Sir Hereward, a British staff officer; but his partner must be traced via the index. No luck there, however, with the "ex-Sergeant Major Edmondson" who denounced Amery in the January 1910 election campaign, or with Lulu (Harcourt) and Runciman, whom Sir Henry Wilson counted among "the miserable pack of Hesitations and Hiccoughs" behind Asquith. Instead one finds such oddities as "Mrs Humphrey Ward" and "Lady Alfred Northcliffe".

To be blunt, Amery deserves better, as does anyone who pays the inflated price for a copy of this book. The diversity of his experiences, the ever-expanding range of his contacts, and the depth of his commitments draw the reader into controversies of the greatest complexity and emotional content. Barnes and Nicholson may have received "broad guidance" in their labours, but they return too little of it in kind.

Starting out with a visit in 1896 to Constantinople, where his bodyman, truly an Unspeakable Turk, regaled him with a confession of "having run the throats of twenty-seven Armenians with his own hands", Amery quickly shifted to South Africa and from the *Manchester Guardian* to *The Times*. Being a war correspondent proved "a most excellent adventure", made him a trenchant critic of military organization, and imbued him with a devotion to Empire. There was the opportunity to meet Milner, who profoundly impressed him, and Kipling, who was "fairly amusing at times". From these early days onwards, Amery consistently viewed all questions of defence, finance, and domestic reform in an imperial context. As he later candidly recognized, he was actually a publicist, "not a journalist, though I suppose I have nominally been one for many years. I run write well in my own fashion, but it's always with an effort, and with an object". Returned to Parliament in a 1911 by-election, he evinced the same tendencies in his oratory.

Like other young idealists who clustered at the feet of Milner, whom he adopted as a father figure and revered for "his knowledge and grasp of big principles", Amery waxed impatient with the workings of a parliamentary democracy. Sooner than most of his associates, he came to despair of the Liberal Imperialists, particularly Asquith. Typically, too, he was a fervent race patriot, so to speak, whose pronouncements are an affront to modern sensibilities, but must be considered as a product of their time. Respectful towards "the real Boer", as worthy an adversary as "the common folk" of Germany in 1914, he considered "the one vital thing is not to let the natives get out of hand and, if they do, suppress them ourselves before doing anything further to the Boers". For the maintenance of imperial control, he contemplated "a sort of caste system", replete with "sexual and social" restrictions to ensure that South Africa would "develop as a white man's country under the guidance of white men, and not as a bastard country like most of South America".

With the same distasteful logic, he admired the militant Ulstermen, "a solid determined looking lot . . . no more Irish than they are Chinese and with not much more use for Parliament than have the 'Chinks' or niggers". Discriminating in his preference for wartime allies, he could not bring himself to repose as much confidence in the Rumanians ("soft and sensual") as in the Serbs, Bulgars, or Greeks. To Lord Robert Cecil, Amery's unsolicited suggestions on war aims—"this applies to giving back niggers to German rule as well as Armenians to Turkish rule"—reeked of "pure Germanism". Yet, if more for strategic than humanitarian reasons, Amery advanced the creation of a Jewish "National Home" in Palestine, and sympathized with Zionist aspirations. Here, as in the subsequent debate over appeasement, he decided from some of his fellow Milnerites, their common ground having been eroded by events.

At one point, Amery proposed to incorporate Gibraltar and Malta into the United Kingdom, but always relegated India to a separate category. Simon, whom he perceived in 1926 to be "rapidly becoming a Tory", concurred at an All Souls dinner (which F. E. Smith, by now Lord Birkenhead, was ineligible to attend) "that the Oriental is not really adapted to our English scheme of Parliamentary Government".

As Secretary of State for the Dominions from 1925 to 1929, Amery worked with greater dedication than effect to promote organic unity. His constitutional blueprint of 1926, immoderately described by its author as "an Athanasian creed for the British Empire", conceded the principle of Dominion autonomy. There remained such contentious issues, assiduously catalogued, as whether Dominion representatives should pay their own hotel bills in London; whether the royal profile should appear on Irish stamps and on the flag, and an abortive scheme for African federation. Amery's general of the part he played "quickening the consciousness of Empire". All the same, he was distressed by mounting dissension within the Baldwin administration and by a growing sense of estrangement from its principal members. "Possibly the best thing would be that we should be beaten", he reflected gloomily on December 31, 1928, "I confess I cannot at this moment see any other way of getting that old man of the sea Winston off our shoulders." Closer in sympathy to Neville Chamberlain, who had the sentimental advantage of being Joe's son, Amery found Churchill equally self-seeking as a politician and a historian. It should prove fascinating to observe the reversal that was to occur in the next decade.

Along with his confidence in the Conservatives' capacity to achieve the goal of imperial unity, Amery's ministerial tenure cost him a degree of perspective. As a rule, he commented more incisively on personalities and issues from the sidelines than from centre stage. Consequently, he commented more coherently on a guilty than as a government official. Overwhelmed by departmental duties (the editors accurately depict him as "preoccupied"), he made a habit of telescoping "a good deal of history into a few brief entries". Consequently, his jottings on Cabinet alignments are merely as perplexing as those on foreign policy questions. On March 4, 1925, for example, the "exciting" matter of an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact was on the agenda:

> The definite adhesion of Curzon, Winston and F.E. to the acceptance of what Hoare and I had so far been the protagonists has completely defeated the Fr scheme (which captured Austen) for pushing the country (forgetting the Empire) into a definite commitment to defend France on the ground that she could never behave rationally till we relieved her fears of what may happen twenty years hence.

In this instance, one could do with a diagram. More responsibly, however, this reviewer could have been glad to settle for more systematic annotation, a more accurate and lucid commentary, and a reliable index.

The Gaelic cause

By Leon O Broin

SEAMAS O BUACHALLA (Editor):
The Letters of P. H. Pearse
528pp. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe. £11.95.
0 901072 87 7

The author of these letters, Patrick Henry Pearse, was thirty-seven years of age at Easter 1916. A graduate and a member of the Irish Bar at which he briefly practised, he was led by a deep interest in the language revival to teach Irish at secondary and university levels, to write short stories and poetry in it, and to edit the Gaelic League's bilingual journal, the *Sword of Light*. In a letter to the *Sword* when barely twenty and very callow, he denounced "the Anglo-Irish heresy", and recommended that Mr Yeats's Irish Literary Theatre should be strangled at birth. The whole idea of an Irish theatre using English was ridiculous. He had nothing of course against Yeats personally, he explained: after all, he was a more English poet of the third or fourth rank, and as such was harmless.

The Gaelic League was supposed to be non-political, but in 1904 Pearse detected an effort being made by the United Irish League to capture it lest it should be absorbed by the Sinn Feiners. Already the Dublin branches were becoming a cockpit for parliamentarians and their opponents who believed in the policy of abstention from Westminster. At the risk of hurting people Pearse urged that the official position should be enforced. However, by 1915 he had completely changed his mind on the subject. In that year the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), of which he had become a leading member, obtained control of the League's executive, declared for an Ireland free and Gaelic, and made it impossible for the non-political President to remain in office.

Freeing Ireland, in IRB terms, meant resorting to physical force; and among Pearse's letters there are a couple, written in the early days of the First World War, in which, almost hysterically, he appeals to Clan na Gael, the IRB's American counterpart, for help to get guns. The providential hour of deliverance must not be allowed to pass. Pearse at this time was a member of a military council which was working out the details of a rising, and held high rank in the Irish Volunteers. Simultaneously, he had other serious things on his mind. He had turned from editing the *Sword of Light* to directing a couple of schools he had set up. His aim for one of them—St. Enda's, a bilingual boys' school of which he was headmaster—was that it should be so permeated by Irish culture that it would be Irish "in a sense not known or dreamt of since the Flight of the Earls".

Whatever their success educationally, and they had some, the schools were a financial disaster, a burden Pearse had to endure until his death. The story is all too painfully told in the letters. "I regret that I am not in a position to let you have a cheque on account this week", is their theme with many variations. "There are a great many calls on me, and I must try to keep everything going. In a few weeks I hope to be able to let you have a substantial cheque". His family suffered with him. In February 1914, as he leaves Queenstown for America where he hopes to raise some money by lecturing, he writes to his mother and encloses six shillings in postage stamps. He had meant to give her some money to take a friend with her to the Christmas pantomime but had never seemed to have it at the right time. If the pantomime was over—he was not sure—they might go somewhere else.

That is probably the most pathetic letter in Seamus O Buachalla's extensive collection. More dramatic is that written in September 1915 in which he appeals to his Clan na Gael friends to save St Enda's and himself from imminent peril: "My fall now will—I speak without any exaggerated idea of my importance—be had for the whole cause". A writ had been issued against him, and behind it he saw a government move to close the school, to bankrupt him and present him to the world as a discredited man who had his failure to meet his creditors by preaching sedition. If he were free to do so, he would go to America by the next boat and earn the money. But to go to America would be to flee from danger. Clan na Gael rose to the occasion. They immediately put up the money, and Pearse was able in a matter of months to join his fellow conspirators in proclaiming an Irish Republic. O Buachalla has brought all the relevant papers of that adventure together, adding considerably thereby to the usefulness of his book.

The 117th edition of The Statesman's Year-Book, Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1980-1981, edited by John Paxton (1168pp. Macmillan. £13.75. 0 333 28124 1) reflects the changing concerns of governments by including special sections on energy, production, consumption and reserves to the year 2000.

To save our souls

By Alan Ryan

RAGHAVAN IYER:
Parapolitics
Toward the City of Man
381pp. Oxford University Press. £9.75.
0 19 502596 2

Raghavan Iyer is a man of many talents and a citizen of three (at least) very different worlds. He is a professor of Political Science at the University of California at Santa Barbara; but his first education was in India, whence he went to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He stayed to teach and do research, and to become President of the Union—which implies a certain capacity for the practicalities as well as the rhetoric of political life. Later, he published a much praised study of Gandhi's political thought—which implied a taste for a different kind of practicality and a different kind of rhetoric, too.

Parapolitics is a work of large-scale political theory, not a piece of autobiography; but Professor Iyer's career would, I think, be guessed by any tolerably attentive reader. The book is a very fluent and readable piece of work, and it is written with some rhetorical flair; it draws on a wide range of resources, from the aphorisms of Buddha, through the dialogues of Plato and the "Five Questions" of Marsilio Ficino, and on to such anxious commentators on technological change as Jacques Ellul; and it is self-centred in the sense which unites all those who, when asked, "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" instantly answer "nothing".

To put it a little differently, Iyer's book is unusual in trying to combine the concern of existential psychology for individual "self-actualization" with the more conventional concerns of traditional political theory. It is a rather "Californian" piece of work, in more than this respect; Iyer tackles almost every topic under the sun, not in institutional detail, but at no great theoretical distance from the detail—at the level of general reflections on the "crisis of leadership" in western democracy, for instance, rather than at the level of the legitimacy of leadership as such, or the technicalities of an improved system of presidential primaries.

It is not easy to summarize the book's argument. Indeed, it is not so much a book with no argument as a set of reflections on a number of themes: on commitment and the dangers of over-commitment, on the relation of means to ends, on the morality of revolution and revolutionaries, on the hazards of liberty and democracy in underdeveloped states, on the present state of the American Dream, and so on. Although Iyer begins with a long and elaborate discussion of "parapolitics", it cannot be said that this makes everything hang together in a way it otherwise would not. His summary statement sheds more darkness than light, indeed:

> Parapolitics signifies the imaginative application of seminal ideas vitalizing political theory and practice; the elaboration of fundamental principles into paradigms of relationships among persons and between civil means and humane ends; the quest for political understanding and action based upon expanding self-awareness; and the ever-recasting perspective of ideals rooted in the ethics, metaphysics, and psychology of self-transcendence.

The thought behind this, however, is not too difficult to reconstruct: Iyer wants to suggest that we can conveniently distinguish six types of politics, concerned with power, perfectibility, stability, welfare, self-preservation, and reason, while parapolitics as "the search for political vision" is in effect whatever theoretical apparatus sustains a rational acceptance of what is valuable in everyday politics while encouraging a critical distance from that politics.

Condensed too abruptly, much of *Parapolitics* sounds trite: we are told that we need liberty but must avoid anarchy, that we need roots but must avoid being parochial, that we should avoid apathy, but must not be taken over by our commitments. Much the same goes for Iyer's judgments about the civil libertarian performance of emergent nations: poverty does not excuse brutality, but the developed world is in a morally dubious position to complain; nation-building is a process which needs more time and a more secure environment than most emergent nations actually possess, but even so they ought not to relax their concern for human rights.

Parapolitics is better uncondensed; uncondensed, it possesses an individual flavour which is more impressive than any particular "message" it has to offer. Iyer worries away at the relationship between Europe and the United States, for instance, coming to no very precise conclusions, but suggesting some of the tensions caused by snobbery on the one share and *nouveau riche* anxiety on the other; he goes on to wonder whether Europe's role in the twenty-first century won't be as a buffer between America and the Third World—but along the way he has time to remind us of Simone Weil's hope that the sufferings of occupied Europe could lead to an increase in humility and unforced compassion, a recollection which casts a strange light on the achievements of the French economy since 1945.

The one thing which one might properly complain of, however, is the lack of a more extended discussion of the relations between political thought and political practice. This is not to say that there is no discussion of this hardy perennial, for there is; but, Iyer's emphasis on the way ideals are overtaken by events, his emphasis on the need to treat even our most serious convictions with a certain lightness, the glancing way he discusses the grand Platonic scheme, the repeated doubts about the sense of revolutionary aspirations even as intellectual constructions, all leave one wondering quite what the practical purpose of *Parapolitics* is supposed to be.

It is easy enough to see Iyer reacting against the orthodoxies of analytical political philosophy, with its stress on the absolute uselessness of thought—except in the case of calculation of means to an end—but to what alternative he is now committed it is much less easy to say. Is *Parapolitics* supposed to show us the way to utopia, or a number of ways to avoid disaster merely? Or is it primarily supposed to start us thinking? It certainly does the latter, but some of the unease that the process causes is, I fear, to be attributed to the uncertainty of Professor Iyer's aims rather than to the intrinsic difficulty of thinking about politics at all.

Information please

John Abbot (1751-1839?), British natural history watercolourist and draughtsman; provided illustrations for . . . *Insecta of Georgia* . . . (edited by J. E. Smith), 2 volumes, 1797; sailed in 1773 for America, where he remained; any information, location of letters, paintings, etc.
G. Scott Wilson.
3 Kelvin Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 7TF.

Edward Burne-Jones, Pre-Raphaelite painter; whereabouts of privately owned letters, for a definitive edition of his correspondence.
Michael Cuno.
Dept of English, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281 USA.

William Paulet Carey (1759-1839), art critic and political writer: unpublished letters or documents by him, or mentioning him, not in public collections; manuscripts, reminiscences or his pamphlets; for a dissertation on theories of patronage in early nineteenth-century English art.
P. R. Fullerton.
Linacre College, Oxford.

Anthony Dopping, Bishop of Meath (1643-1697), Irish political and religious extremist: whereabouts of any volumes from his personal library, dispersed in the eighteenth century—these will be signed and not book-plated, and often contain his own notes.
Peter Hendre.
City Tuition Unit, Cambridgeshire Education Committee, Coleridge Road, Cambridge CB1 3PJ.

Robert Hay of Linplum (1799-1863), traveller and Egyptologist: whereabouts of any journals, letters or pictures.
David Fargus.
29 St Ninians Way, Linlithgow EH49 7BU, Scotland.

André Malraux: for a historical and literary analysis of his polemics with Trotsky and Victor Serge, any references, correspondence, or other information.
Robert S. Thornberry.
Department of Romance Languages, University of Alberta, Edmonton (Alberta), T6G 2E6 Canada.

Jan Masaryk: name of female author of memoir on the last years of his life and ultimate suicide; for purposes of research.
Pamela Richards.
12 Royal Crescent, Brighton, Sussex.

Count Joseph-Napoleon Primoli, great-grandson of Joseph Bonaparte, escort to the Empress Eugenie and Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, prominent in literary circles during the Belle Epoque: any information, unpublished letters or any other material, for a biography.
Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek.
43 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003.

commentary

Receding futures

By Richard Calvocoressi

The Shock of the New
BBC TV

Anyone expecting a crash course in modern art will be—perhaps already has been—disappointed by BBC television's *The Shock of the New*. Its author and presenter, the journalist Robert Hughes, has decided instead to give us a selective and highly critical account of that most elusive of phenomena, the "modernist spirit" in art and architecture, in which a number of important twentieth-century artists are left out altogether—among painters, Beckmann and Dubuffet spring immediately to mind—because their achievements are too individualistic to be used as illustrations of his argument.

We are not supposed to infer from this that Hughes is unsympathetic to their work—far from it—but the exclusion of all major sculptors except Brancusi (who is allowed about two minutes in a programme otherwise devoted to Northern Romantic painting) is an extraordinary omission, whatever point one is trying to get across. We are shown nothing of the work of Gaudier-Brzeska, Epstein, Gonzalez, Giacometti, David Smith, Moore or Caro; the challenge which faced artists, architects and even politicians after the last war, of elevating non-descriptive sculpture into an outdoor public art, is totally ignored. Hughes evidently responds more passionately to architecture: indeed, his scathing attack on the moral pretensions and social disasters of the International Style in "Trouble in Utopia" (Programme 4) is probably the most coherent and persuasive piece in the series, although it repeats material first explored by Christopher Booker in his controversial *City of Towers* film in 1978.

The Shock of the New consists of eight programmes, each lasting an hour. The first two deal respectively with reactions to technological change and with the cataclysmic effect of the First World War on the consciousness of European artists. Attitudes to the machine and especially to mechanized motion, ranging from Futurist enthusiasm to Dadaist disdain, are set against a background of startling advances in science and industry. There is a good deal of social and political history, shown mainly through old newsreel film, much of it familiar. Hughes is at pains to emphasize the simultaneity of experience—the way events happened at once or seem to succeed one another with ever-increasing rapidity—and, in later programmes, the ceaseless flow of broadcast information, both of which radical artists attempted to come to grips with and which became the central preoccupations of modernist imagery. This characteristic rhythm of twentieth-century life is used by Hughes as an excuse for some of the discontinuities in the narrative structure of each programme: like the modernist artist, we are forced to adapt to sudden, unexplained switches in time and place. Programmes 3 to 8 take us on a breathless journey through French colourist painting, rationalist architecture and design, anti-rational art, expressionism (including abstract expressionism) and Pop, ending up with a brief and not very encouraging look at the art of the past fifteen years. It is an uneven but always invigorating ride.

Hughes's personal style also takes some getting used to, though after a while it becomes clear that beneath the detached, tongue-in-cheek manner and the Clive Jamesian weakness for appalling puns lies a consistency of approach and even a serious concern for the future of art. Viewers wooed by the smooth tones and polished phrases of a Kenneth Clark will be put off by Hughes's abruptness and irony; as aesthete, he treats art with the irreverence his swaggering appearance suggests. This is refreshing. Despite his tendency to draw glib conclusions, his lucid descriptions of works of art are often intelligent and perceptive; at his best, he makes us want to look at those works afresh. But we may at times question his judgement, as when, for example, he reduces the complexities and ambiguities of Duchamp's *Large Glass* to little more than a crude hymn to masturbation. A similar kind of trite Freudianism colours his interpretation of "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon"—a fear he later identifies in the paintings of two great expressionist painters, Kirchner and (with more justification, perhaps) Munch.

Hughes's obsession with Paris as "the modernist capital" allows him to mention Vienna only twice in passing throughout the whole series: as a backdrop to Kokoschka's early portraits in Programme 6 and, even more obliquely, during a memorable interview in the final programme with a surreal-looking Arnulf Rainer surrounded by death masks. Apart from Kokoschka, no Viennese artist or architect active during the last twenty or thirty years of the Habsburg Empire features in the series.

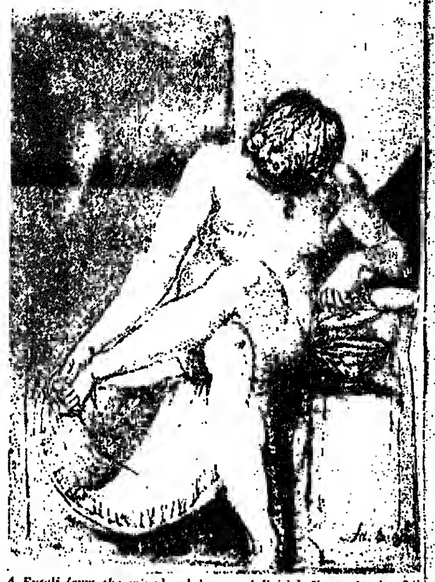
This unbalanced view of early modernism is partly made up for by Hughes's loving evocation of a now almost vanished world of Cubist and Surrealist Paris. Otherwise it is a shame how rarely *The Shock of the New* conveys a strong sense of place, given the exotic locations to which our intrepid reporter is taken (by courtesy of the BBC, Time Life and Reiner Moritz Productions of Munich). We watch Hughes drinking coffee under the arcades in Turin, summoning the ghosts of Nietzsche and de Chirico; smoking a cigar in a deserted Brasilia; driving a jeep down Manhattan; walking in the scorched and windswept Nevada desert; addressing us from Hitler's rostrum in Nuremberg; interrupting a Buddhist ceremony in the Rothko Chapel at Houston.

A lot of this elaborate scene-setting has gone into the series, much of it unnecessary (Hughes standing in front of the ruins at Dachau in Programme 6), embarrassing (the awkward attempts in Programme 3 to convey the flavour of the Mediterranean), or both. Too often works of art are set to music—and on one occasion to dance—at the expense of providing us with more information, although in the case of a Bellmer torso which ravishes to the sound of catatonic laughter in Programme 5, this is quite effectively managed. (The music throughout has obviously been chosen with care: all the more infuriating, then, that the BBC pianists in its habit of not naming individual pieces in the credits.) All good television, perhaps, but at a total cost of half a million pounds, is it really justified?

Certain things in the series, though, are of more lasting value: film sequences of artists and architects talking about their work, some of these sequences archived (Malcolm Muggeridge interviewing Dali about his moustache), others made especially for the series: the imaginative recreation of aspects of mass urban culture in Programme 7 to indicate its ambivalent relationship with Pop; and finally, though one does not include it without qualification, Hughes's own polemic.

Filming for *The Shock of the New* began in Berlin in the autumn of 1977 at the tentative stage of exhibitions gathered together under the collective title of *Trends of the Seventies*. Hughes reviewed those exhibitions on Time magazine (whose art critic he has been for the past ten years) and much of his initial reaction is transferred, without loss of force, into the television series, becoming one of its dominant themes. "This was the last period", he wrote in 1977, "in which the dream of the engaged avant-garde seemed credible: that corrupt societies could be toppled and utopias created with the aid of art. How Dada, surrealism, constructivism and the Bauhaus attempted this dream—and witnessed its failure—is the broad subject of these shows". In the final programme, "The Future that Was", Hughes examines the historical function of the avant-garde and considers how its role has been neutralized by a combination of pressures, of which fashion, the art market and the union of the museum as a container of modernist cultural artefacts are the most conspicuous. Seeing how some artists in the 1970s tried to sidestep the system, by accepting works of art whose physical alienation from both spectator and museum made it impossible for them to be collected, makes for some spectacular television. Hughes's own performance in which the artist Stuart Brisley pushes himself to the limits of his endurance, and a haunting film of Walter de Maria's "Lightning Field" in a remote corner of New Mexico, are two of the most rewarding programmes.

Much of Hughes's thesis for the last earlier programme appeared last December in a lengthy article for the *Sunday Times Magazine* published as a farewell to the 1970s. It ended, as this series ends, on a note of relief—relief that faith in a deterministic view of art history has at last been abandoned. There are certain ideals, Hughes says, in which we now no longer believe: art's power to liberate anything except perhaps the individual mind; the idealistic value of novelty (the styles would better have been titled *The Thirst for the Novel*); and the predominance of any one idiom to express collective feelings. The tyranny of modernistic shibboleths is over. As we enter the 1980s, Hughes's message (not an unfashionable one) is clear: "Pluralism rules, OK?"



A Fuseli from the mixed exhibition of British figure drawings, Dutch prints and works by Watteau in the Prints and Drawings Gallery of the British Museum until next spring.

A Polar Explorer

All the huskies are eaten. There is no space
left in the diary. And the beads of quick
words scatter over his spouse's sepia shaded face
adding the date in question like a mole to her lovely cheek.
Next, the snapshot of his sister. He doesn't spare his kin:
what's been made is the highest possible latitude!
And like the silk stocking of a burlesque half-nude
queen it climbs up his hip: gangrene.

Joseph Brodsky

Translated by F. F. Morton

commentary

Sweet village landskips

By Graham Reynolds

Thomas Gainsborough
Tate Gallery

As the first comprehensive exhibition of Gainsborough's work for nearly a hundred years this event will play an important part in contributing to the reassessment of eighteenth-century British painting which is now under way. The content of the exhibition has been chosen, and the admirable catalogue written, by John Hayes, Director of the National Portrait Gallery. He is the author of the definitive catalogue of Gainsborough's drawings and of a forthcoming one of his landscape paintings. It is natural that his selection should reflect these areas of study, and the balance of the exhibition is tilted more towards Gainsborough's activity as a landscape painter than to those full-length patrician portraits which greet us with such engaging familiarity in countless houses and galleries here and in the United States. Gainsborough, who wrote to Jackson "I am sick of Portraits and want very much to take my viol-da-gambo and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint landskips and enjoy the fog-end of life in quietness and ease", would have approved of the emphasis placed on the aspect of art for which he had most natural inclination.

The oil paintings are arranged in a chronological sequence which follows the migrations of Gainsborough's studio from Sudbury to London, back to Sudbury, then on to Ipswich, Bath and finally on London for the last fifteen years of his life. It is a career in which the provinces have played a surprisingly important role for a country in which local schools of art have not normally flourished. The presence of potential sitters for portraits was, in each case the motive for his moves; the fact that in each section of the exhibition similar numbers of landscapes have been available to balance the portraits shows how consistently Gainsborough sought relief from being "chiefly in the face way". The earliest portraits reveal him as a naive face painter, gifted with the talent for catching a likeness, but presenting it with an awkwardness comparable to that of mindast contemporary miniaturists such as Gervase Spenser and Luke Sullivan.

He was already viewing landscape with a sharp eye and painting it with a more instructed sense of style, as the newly discovered "View of St Mary's Church, Hadleigh" reveals. At almost the same moment he achieved that enchanting combination of landscape and portraiture of which the National Gallery's "Mr and Mrs Robert Andrews" is the perfect exemplar. This delectable phase of Gainsborough's painting is represented here by "Heneage Lloyd and his Sister" from the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the double portrait from the Louvre which John Hayes convincingly accepts as showing Gainsborough with his wife Margaret, whom he married in 1746. A French accent derived from his early association with Gravelot is especially pronounced in this rococo gem.

But Sudbury, Suffolk was no place for a Gainsborough, and his move to Bath in 1759, when he was thirty-two, brought him into a broader world and spurred him to a new maturity. Nothing in his earlier work quite prepares us for the originality of "Ann Ford, later Mrs. Thicknesse" painted in 1760, in which his enthusiasm for Van Dyck and his love of music are fused in the inventive calligraphy of his established manner. Van Dyck was to be studied near at hand in a dozen country houses, and Gainsborough translated his air of aristocratic aloofness into the more informal elegance of the eighteenth century. His landscape of these middle years also reflects the influence of earlier masters. Withdrawn from the direct observation of Suffolk hedges and trees, he explores a world of imagination lit sometimes by the cold blues and greens of Claude, more frequently by the roseate hues of Rubens's landscape. The latter style was encouraged by his beginning now to work by candlelight.

Gainsborough's final move to London after fifteen years' practice in Bath was hastily decided, but proved a prudent step. Although his relations with the Royal Academy were mocked by quarrels about the hanging of his paintings he was warmly supported by the Royal Family and the fashion. "The Morning Walk", painted for the marriage of William and Elizabeth Gunlott, is one of the summits of his achievement in London, intensely actual and at the same time full of feeling. But his consuming desire to escape from commissioned portraiture is revealed by the riches of the last room at the Tate, devoted to his late landscapes and the "fancy pictures" in which he approached as nearly as his temperament would allow the poetic and historic illustration so strongly advocated by Reynolds and his fellows as the height of artistic ambition.

In one of his many moments of self-criticism Gainsborough said of Reynolds "Damn him, how various he is". It is true that neither Gainsborough's training nor his taste led him to cast his sitters in the mould of Michelangelo's Prophets, as Reynolds did in his portrait of Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse. But this exercise displays his innate resourcefulness in technique and presentation. For instance, his method of drawing ranges from simple pencil outline through stump work, watercolour and gouache to oil, and each choice of medium diversifies his invention.

The introductory note to the catalogue refers to the financial constraints imposed on the presentation of the exhibition. These are to be welcomed if they are responsible for the uncluttered and logical way in which the works are displayed. We do not have to view them swathed in bunting or search for them amidst banks of roses, nor are they shown in the sort of labyrinthine maze which made the Tate's Constable show so hard to enjoy. But one point of presentation deserves discussion. The whole exhibition is lit artificially by harsh spotlamps. Both money and energy could be saved by natural light, and this would enable a far truer estimate to be formed of the tonal quality and condition of the paintings. It may be argued that Gainsborough chose to paint by subdued or artificial light. But his subdued light was modified daylight, and his artificial light was candlelight.

The present lighting also exacerbates the difficulties of hanging an exhibition of which the elements are necessarily in very different states of cleanliness and preservation. The juxtaposition of the badly blanched canvas of "The Royal Sir Henry Bate-Dudley" with the shiny new portrait of "Johann Christian Fischer" throws this problem into cruel relief. The raking light on "Ann Ford" blinds the spectator on close approach and makes it impossible to decide how far the painting of the head approximates to its original state.

Dr Hayes explains that he has cast his introduction in the form of a short biography and bids us look elsewhere for critical or art-historical appreciation. But to a greater extent than in most artists the biography is both the art and the criticism. The walks of the exhibition echo the facts of Gainsborough's life and character; the excitability only just this side of sanity, his enthusiasms for dogs (the earliest dated painting is of "Bumper, a most remarkable sagacious cur"), music and musicians, country folk and above all the countryside. Only in some muscle imaginative shall we be able to see all the peaks of his achievement. "The Mall", all a-flutter like a lady's fan, cannot be moved from the Frick Collection in New York, where it is housed amidst his peers of all European schools of painting. Nor can the "The Blue Boy" be lent from the Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

In the latter case Dr Hayes has given us an acceptable substitute in "Paul Cobb Methuen", and defused the argument about the use of blue as a foreground colour by pointing out that this "Van Dyck" suit was a studio property in which any sitter might have chosen to be painted. Further gaps caused by the decision not to borrow from London public collections such works as "Cornard Wood" and "Mr and Mrs Andrews", can be made good by visits to the National Gallery and Kenwood. Such works will be included when a remodelled version of the exhibition travels to Paris next February.

Even without these potential embellishments, there is richness enough here to convey Gainsborough's range and achievement. Above all, the opportunity to see as many of his landscapes enables us to decide whether we agree with Hazlitt that they are "illnasy caricatures of Rubens" or with Constable that "the stillness of noon, the depths of twilight, and the dews and pearls of the morning, are all to be found on the canvases of this most benevolent and kindhearted man".

John Hayes's catalogue for the Gainsborough show, 158pp., 152 plates (eighteen in colour), is available from the Tate Gallery Publications Department, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG, at £3.25 paper (0 905005 72 4) plus £1.50 post and package. A clothbound version will be ready in mid-November at £4.75.

Party conversations

By David Edgar

Teadora
Hampstead Theatre

In the introduction to his play *State of Revolution*, Robert Bolt says that the events of the Russian Revolution were so terrible, the endeavours of its leaders so total, and the outcome "so tragically far short of what they had intended", that for him "merely to think about it steadily is to be overwhelmed by primitive pity and awe". Bolt's intelligent and meticulous play, however, itself fell short of his own tragic aspiration. By concentrating on the great personalities at the centre of the Bolshevik Party, it became a compound of detail, a series of passionate debates an important but strangely abstract themes. The absence of the millions stripped both the characters and their enterprise of a sense of historic scale.

In *Traitors*, the Australian writer Stephen Sewell faces the same problem in reverse. His story of the conflict between the Left Oppositionists and the increasingly brutalized secret police in the Russia of the late 1920s is set among the anonymous rank-and-file of the Communist Party. But Sewell, who clearly knows his stuff, is so careful not to bore us with it that the specific issues of the Bolshevik split remain unexplained and unargued, becoming little more than an assumed moral backdrop to the betrayal and torture of the characters with whom we are intended to identify. Indeed, our own sense of distance from the passion of the debate seems to transfer itself to the characters: Sewell's protagonists appear as isolated, anxious, almost passive individuals moving through an alien landscape, rather than active participants in a violent struggle for power. His most lively character is a working-class woman who is ignorant of and indifferent to the great battles taking place around her; and his secondary metaphor of a hurried, uncomfortable but intense affair between a Trotskyite and a Chekist (whose roles are unknown to each other) becomes the most vivid and moving event of the play.

I am sure Sewell doesn't mean that only personal and sexual relations have any richness or reality, and that all ideology is by definition anti-human (any more than Bolt intended his play to become an everyday story of resolution-framing folk). Their common problem is one of form. Naturalism is ideally suited to the representation of shared experience; it is at its best when dealing with universal but intimate areas of human activity, with domestic and sexual life. The defining reaction to naturalism is recognition, which is why naturalism is least effective in the social and political arena, of which an audience may have little or no experience.

This problem is seen in its simplest form in dialogue: all political language is shorthand, and the naturalistic writer dealing with the politics of another place and time is forced to rely either on unexplained detail ("Trotsky must desist from any further criticisms of Zinoviev") or on over-generalized platitudes ("If the Party rises against itself it will fall and everything we have gained will be lost"). Bolt's solution was to set most of his plays in formal meetings, where talk is the act.

The RSC's popular production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, in David Edgar's adaptation (reviewed in the *TLS* on June 27), returns to the Aldwych for a season from November 13 to January 3. Edward Petherbridge, Roger Rees and David Threlfall reprise the issues could be explained without devoiding from naturalistic probability; but he shares with Sewell the wider problem of writing about historical movements in the language of personal relations. Bolt chooses a Shakespearean mode, taking great characters as symbols of the social forces heaving beneath them, but his specificity robs them both of the generality and the grandeur of tragic and epic heroes. Sewell works on an anecdotal level; he gives himself the freedom of fiction, but the story he creates, though clearly intended as a particularization of the general, remains a parable rather than a paradigm. The personal and sexual scenes are richly and sensitively written; the scenes of political debate seem pedestrian—they feel like an overcautious translation. Sewell is so keen to avoid anachronism, for example, that his dialogue frequently relies on the blandest figures of speech.

Neil Johnson's production at the Hampstead Theatre is controlled to the point of constriction. The best performances come from Colin Baker as a nervous opportunistic accommodating himself to Stalinist realities, and Emma Piper as the Trotskyite organizer. John Byrne's set—a wall of peeling icons divided by a grey corridor, bleakly lit with naked bulbs—provides the kind of historical metaphor that is absent from most of the play.

commentary

When Irish eyes are shutting

By Derek Mahon

Juno and the Paycock
Aldwych Theatre

There was a group of American undergraduates at the Aldwych on the night I saw the RSC revival of *Juno and the Paycock*, and I wondered if they could have guessed, without being told, that this was one of the great plays of the twentieth century. Amazed by the listlessness of the first act, I took some time to realize that it was intentional, not the result of a virus among the cast. Trevor Nunn's production adopts a radically different approach to O'Casey's masterpiece from the one to which we have long been accustomed. Subduing the star turns in the interest of the whole, he has come up with a slow-moving, low-keyed version which is more insidiously depressing than any I have yet seen, if adequate on its own terms. An interesting line of inquiry perhaps, but not a recipe for artistic success.

Nunn's strategy is mistaken because the play is composed of star turns. It is a play about character, even "characters", as well as circumstances, and to eschew vividness of personality, a vividness the playwright certainly intended, is to lose a vital dimension of the play, and the one that makes it great. The Boyles and their neighbours are victims of circumstance, granted; but they must be allowed to be more than that, or we make of a complex and exhilarating work a piece of doleful social realism. Not even that. The reality of the long-demolished Dublin tenements is not here, or only partly so; as any reader of O'Casey's autobiographies will know, the irrepressible high spirits were, in these surroundings, as much a fact of life as the squalor.

Norman Rodway as Boyle and John Rogan as Joxer are, therefore, not so much disappointing as infuriating. Deflected by the rationale of the production from playing their marvellous parts to the full, they give us, respectively, a dejected and irritable codger apparently endowed with sober self-knowledge, and a whinging creep devoid of even superficial charm. When Boyle announces defiantly in June, "Put a little spirit left in me still", he is boasting, but it should not be an empty boast, as the liveliness of his fancy and the treachancy of his self-dramatizing balderdash make clear. Self-dramatizing in a literal sense; for he and Joxer conduct their own little play within the play, oddly prefiguring Estragon and Vladimir, though much of the fun of that goes by the board here.

On the plus side, Gerard Murphy brings more presence to the part of the ossified and frightened Johnny than is usually the case. O'Casey himself, during rehearsals for the original Abbey production, habitually referred to Juno as "the play about Johnny Boyle"—meaning, perhaps, that Johnny represented in his own person all the desperation of a people living, like the Boyles, on impossible dreams. Nobody in the play pays him much heed, and the part is too often treated as a nonsence, like Johnny himself; but that isn't the case here. And Judi Oench is a memorable Juno; her bitterness qualified by an essential sweetness, she alone of the cast shines through the doctrinaire opacity.

I described Boyle as "self-dramatizing", and the theme of the play is the price of this self-dramatization—even, it might be said, the price of drama. In terms of the Boyles' family life, that price is disintegration and chaos. So too in the political sphere, where theatrical postures and heightened language have led to civil war. "Give us one of your shut-eyed ones", says Boyle to Joxer during a singsong; and Joxer forgets the words. "Shut-eyed ones", for O'Casey as for Dr Cruise O'Brien in our own day, are the source of half the misery of Ireland; yet they are o seemingly indispensable part of the drama: even the RSC permits itself the liberty of introducing end concluding each act with a snatch of the king of demotic Dublin melody of which O'Casey evidently took a dim view. This is unfortunate; the effect is to cheapen and trivialize the play itself.

It is Juno's distinction that she resists the blandishments of drama and song, and her misfortune that she (and her daughter Mary, despite her half-baked socialism) sees the only alternative in a mirage of middle-class gentility. The power of the play resides in its intellectual battle with its own emotional appeal. Clear-sighted though it may be, Juno and the Paycock is also O'Casey's great "shut-eyed one". The struggle within the artefact itself is of central importance, and to tilt the balance so completely in Juno's favour, by denying Boyle his measure of magnetism, however spurious, is to forfeit a crucial tension.

A bridge too few

By Savkar Aitinel

The Caucasian Chalk Circle
Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow

Brecht's favourite philosopher, Hegel, once spoke of his own habit of being "at once far and against the actual". Judging by *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht himself most have had similar feelings during the final phase of his artistic career, for this, the last of his great plays, is not only a superb example of epic theatre but also in some ways signifies a return to the sort of "Aristotelian" and "naturalistic" drama which he had rejected so categorically as a young man.

Inside the fable about labour and property there is another play about a not too bright servant girl's devotion to a baby boy who is not even her own child. Thus this aspect of the tale held a considerable emotional fascination for Brecht is indicated not only by one of his several dry runs for the play, the short story entitled *Der Augsburger Kreidekreis*, but also by his own original 1955 production of the *Chalk Circle* with the Berliner Ensemble. Here Brecht used a number of devices at odds with the aims of epic theatre. He had an actual rickety bridge built on the stage for the famous "flight into the northern mountains" episode, rendering naturalistically what naturalistic theatre itself might well have stylized, and when the handle that Grusha carries throughout the play was finally opened in the trial scene, a little boy was revealed, as if to demonstrate that wrapped inside the symbolic was always real.

The Citizens' Theatre's production of the Chalk Circle eschews Brecht's own realistic ornamental effects. There is no décor, and such props as are there are crude in comparison to the lime scene in photographs of the Berlin production. Yet, in a sense the same blend of stylization and realism is skilfully exploited by the translation combines barely and subtlety. James and Jo Steen's matter-of-fact rendering of the prose parts alternating with W. H. Auden's lyrics. Similarly, alienating devices are effectively used to elicit emotional response as well. In a move similar to Brecht's decision to cast the narrator as both the narrator and Azdak, thereby emphasizing the continuity between commentary and action, the troublesome prologue is drastically cut and the actors speak of their impatience to be done with the fable and get on with the play. Sylvane Waters, who follows Brecht's "acting" as Michael Ashcroft, provides a brilliant *Verfremdungseffekt*, but he is also particularly moving when he haltingly recites from a piece of paper that his appeal to Grusha not to be in danger.

And of course there is Brecht himself. Brecht described his work as "beautiful" and suggested that anyone attempting the part for the first study Brecht's "Dalle Gobbe". Whether Stan Thomas took this advice, I cannot say, but he was splendid in the role. Indeed, arguably the only flaw in the overplaying of Azdak by Bill Wallace: a minor shortcoming in a thoughtful and elegant production.

'The Chances of Rhyme'

Sir,—With its running debate against the superb scholar W. K. Wimsatt, my book *The Chances of Rhyme* is written in part as an attempt to qualify the modern Augustan position C. H. Sisson stands for. It is admirable that in his review of the book (September 12) Mr Sisson saw that and resisted it. Less admirable are the methods he was led into: (1) attempts to touch me personally, as in his crack about my salary and the mention of my daughter; (2) misrepresentation of the book as a panegyric of easy sincerity, when it is in fact a description of how a post-Romantic poetics of sincerity can affect the handling of a traditional device. Readers of this book will see how, curiously, the review is a précis of the main lines of the argument which appropriates most of the points I actually make—but as arguments against Mr Sisson's version of me. Mr Sisson and his friends at *Poetry Nation* may call for the moral beauty of the Augustan virtues of urbanity and civility, but does his review live up to his own high standards?

DONALD WESLING.
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Byzantium

Sir,—Thankful as I am to Robert Browning for his kind review of my *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (September 26), I should like to observe that he is mistaken about the one point of fact he chose to contradict me on. He writes: "The completion of the sixth millennium of the Byzantine era, when many expected the end of the world to occur, was in 492, not 508." That is not so. The world era starting in 5508 BC was not used before about the eighth century. Prior to that, the most widely accepted computation (the so-called Alexandrian era) was from 5492 BC, so that the end of the sixth millennium fell, as I said, in 508 AD. Which goes to show that my excursus on Byzantine chronology was not, after all, entirely unnecessary.

CYRIL MANGO.
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Filling in the Blanks

Sir,—While in agreement with Claude Rawson (Letters, October 3) I think there is a further need for discrimination between the merely irritating use of blanked-out names (or words) and their, as it were, creatively ambiguous use. On the first page of *Barchester Towers* there is an example of the former: "The death of old Dr Gransby, who had for many years filled the chair with weak authority, took place exactly as the ministry of Lord —— was going to give place to that of Lord ——." I find this simply irritating. Dickens would have filled the blanks with saucy names.

As an example of the use of a blank, the filling of which might prove a diminution of the implicatory range" (Pat Rogers, September 12) may I cite lines fifty-nine and sixty of Marvell's Satire "Last Instructions to a Painter." (1667)? The poet is writing of Anne Hyde: "Happy's of women if she were but able To make her glassen D——s once malleable.

Both these lines are extra-metrical by one syllable in a sequence of otherwise perfect ten-syllable lines. The Penguin Marvell (1972, page 94) dogmatically prints "Dukes" in the blank (which is Margoliouth's conjectural conjecture since "Poems (1681 1667)" has "bes" Duke"). But the 1689 edition leaves the space blank and the British Library manuscript copy of 1689 has "Dildoes" (Margoliouth I 272).

The Penguin commentary contains no reference to this second alternative: but "Dukes" makes the sense and distorts the metre. The alternative "Dildoes" is both metrically suitable, satisfies the couplet's metrical requirements, and has a basis (at least) to report—for the Royal Society were, on the authority of Joseph Glanvill (Plus Ultra, 1668, Chapter XIII), experimenting with making glass malleable—one of the several targets Marvell is aiming at in his mocking lines.

Leaving such a line blank with all available alternatives provided in a commentary is, I am sure, the most fruitful way of dealing with this still current device.

THOS. ADAMS.
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A. C. Benson and Elgar

Sir,—In Alan Ball's review of David Newsome's portrait of A. C. Benson as a Dilettante (September 5), he reminded us of Benson's association with Elgar who set several of Benson's odes to music. "Land of Hope and Glory" has of course guaranteed a certain immortality for both men, but it was Elgar who provided the initial music which became the catalyst for Benson.

The famous melody already existed as the Trio Tune in Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March and he followed the suggestion of King Edward VII and incorporated his tune in the Coronation Ode for the King's coronation in 1902. Benson wrote the words and he therefore already had a melody available to which one section could be set.

It is unfortunate that Elgar had to alter the note values in encompass the words and the mere familiar version is a separate song, which although so well known does neither the composer nor author great credit; but fate has decreed that neither wrote anything more celebrated.

A. H. A. NEILL.
11 Limburg Road, London SW11 1HB.

Stealing Purses

Sir,—There is a witticism in *Henry IV* that appears to have escaped the notice of Shakespeare's editors. Question: "What is the connection between the Gadshill scene and Falstaff's walking off the battlefield with Hotspur's body?" Answer: "In both episodes he is stealing purses (Porcies)." I am convinced Shakespeare intended the joke but other readers may be able to read more significance into it than I can. Perhaps they can also suggest other examples of this kind of visual punning.

JOHN M. WALLACE.
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The Harvard Guide

Sir,—Donald Hall has indeed put his finger on a flaw in the *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing* (September 5). As no provision was made for a chapter on non-fictional prose, the book, to my great regret, omits discussion of such fine writers as Eleanor Clark, Peter Matthiessen, John McPhee, or E. B. White. These lacunae will be remedied in the next edition. The thematic organization of the *Harvard Guide* has some longitudes—what scheme would not?—and, it appears, several of the favourite writers of your reviewer (who thinks Kenneth Rexroth "the best living American poet") have slipped through our nets. Differing opinions, however pronounced, as to the priorities given novelists and poets fall within the civilities of discourse in your columns, and I beg leave to address them. In his misleading and unfounded allegations of bias directed at me as editor of this work and as author of its chapters on poetry, however, Mr Hall goes beyond the tolerable bounds of honest controversy.

I am denounced as being "a conservative as Genghis Khan"; for making "absurd groupings" of the writers discussed; for errors of fact; and for betraying a pervading prejudice against women.

A reviewer who thinks Genghis Khan synonymous with conservative taste reveals what core he himself takes with historical and linguistic accuracy. The charge of conservatism seems based on the coverage, in chapters by my co-authors as well as in my own, of important writing in each decade of our period. Readers of Mr Hall's review can scarcely have inferred that the *Harvard Guide*, is intended as a history of American literature since 1945, nor, as he would have had it, as a report on the most recent flutterings among the pennants of the avant-garde. One must ask how fit is Mr Hall to judge the literary history of this period, dismissing as "that elephant's provoyant" Len Brandy's chapter on such significant work as the post-war novels of Dos Passos and Steinbeck and the careers of Mailer, James Jones, Vidal, Mary McCarthy, Cheever, Wallace, and Wright Morris. With his nose for novelty Mr Hall objects to my giving short shrift to concrete poetry and note to the sound-text movement. Whatever such hybrids may be worth as visual or aural experience, they contribute in writing the very drivers in a demolition derby contribute to theoretical physics. To take seriously the claim that "in poetry the leading force of publication has become the public reading" is to fail to distinguish between a literary experience and attendence at an entertainment: to maintain that the speaking aloud to crowds of such texts as can be taken in at a first hearing constitutes poetry's "proper relationship to its audience" is to forfeit critical standards altogether.

Among the groupings Mr Hall finds "absurd" are chapters which, he says, "only reveal that some novelists are Jewish or Southern whom one might otherwise identify merely as novelists", although the novelists so described identify themselves in these ways, and in their subjects, themes, language, and conceptions of character proclaim the heritage of their culture. Mr Hall fails to show in what ways the works of Faulkner, Eudora Welty, or Robert Penn Warren are diminished by Lewis P. Simpson's exposition of novels conditioned by these authors' experience as Southerners. One can imagine how profound or useful a descriptive historical study might be of the work of Bellow, Malamud, Roth and Singer which failed to note the centrality to these writers of their backgrounds. Mr Hall's complaint that Mark Shechner's chapter on these and other novelists mentions no poets, therefore in the *Harvard Guide* "Jews write fiction", suggests how attentively he has read my discussions of poets (Ginsberg, Hecht, Marvin Bell among them) whose work reflects Jewish traditions.

Mr Hall is astonished that "Dickey, Ammons, Simpson and Stafford [are] outside the Establishment — prizewinners all, judges of literary contests". In fact I write that these poets (and Galway Kinnell, another prize-winner) are perceived not to be in the Establishment "as established by those who oppose it". This has nothing to do with prizes, but rather with the way some of our most original poets are regarded by others who reject, as they have done, Eliot's assumptions of tradition and the individual talent, the dominant aesthetic during the first two decades of the period. Of course Mr Hall is free to make sociological instead of aesthetic distinctions. I find myself faulted for including Anthony Hecht and John Hollander among those who belong to no movement. Is not Hecht a dissident among the aforementioned contemporaries, all of whom jettison the conventions to which he gives new vitality? To which school would Mr Hall consign the author of poems as original as Hollander's "Spectral Emanations"? In his rush to judgment Mr Hall proves a slipshod reader, attributing to me an allusion to "persecuted and exiled writers" which I agree is "tasteless", and intimated as much when quoting it from his favourite poet, Kenneth Rexroth.

According to Donald Hall, it is "implicitly belittling" and shows only "condescension" to devote a chapter to writers many of whom proclaim themselves feminists, concern themselves with the consciousness of their sex, and, in works of fiction, poetry, and social commentary, analyse the lives of their characters, their own feelings, and the structure of society from this basis. Years ago I would have agreed with Mr Hall that a writer is a writer, whether male or female. In the past decades, American women—many writers among them—have demanded a room of their own. I now agree with them that their work deserves consideration in the terms in which they and their readers perceive it. When Mr Hall says that to do this is to relegate women writers to a "sub-category of literature", he must be paraphrasing Elizabeth Janeway, who in the first paragraph of her chapter asks whether women's literature exists. Too bad he did not turn the page to read her define her field as "not an adjunct to normal, masculine writing, but as an equally significant report from another, equally significant area of experience". If he believes that the way to do justice to women writing on women's themes is in discussing their work only in the context of writings on other themes by men, it is time Mr Hall had his consciousness raised.

From his assertion that I merely "mention a few women who were publishing [poetry] in the 1950s and 1960s", one could scarcely guess that among those mentioned I give extended treatment as major poets to Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Denise Levertov, Adrienne Rich, May Swenson, and Sylvia Plath. (Many other women poets are treated in Mrs Janeway's chapter.) To praise Plath's achievement is not enough; one is guilty of sexist bias if the limitations of her view of experience are acknowledged, although who can doubt that in her "inexplicable subject matter" (I am quoting Elizabeth Hardwick), "Torture, mutilation, destruction are offered as interesting in themselves, without any suggestions that they are a problem"?

I am further berated for omitting a dozen young women who are indeed good poets at the beginnings of their careers. In this history of three and a half decades, with few exceptions my co-authors and I have dealt with writers of either sex who had larger bodies of work by the time the *Harvard Guide* went to press than had the latest winners of the Yale Younger Poets series. A history of American writing of the past third of a century can scarcely be a contributors' column to the newest little magazine.

Your reviewer's disparagements might be understandable had I written thus in his latest book, *Remembering Poets*, he seemed never to have sought out any women poets and so could recall only men. But this cannot be the case, since Donald Hall is one of those writers not discussed in the *Harvard Guide*. Was it modesty that stayed his hand from including his own name on the roster of the slighted? For his catching some slips that escaped proofreading I am of course to his debt; those will be amended in the next printing.

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A mortgage on all your houses

By Jacqueline Pearson

Black Lear
Crucible Studio, Sheffield

Ernest Nahum Tate to Edward Bond playwrights have wanted to rebuild *King Lear* in a dramatic idiom more in keeping with their own views of literature and society. Now Barrie Keefe's *Black Lear* takes a contemporary black East End family and reinterprets Shakespeare in a strongly political way.

The central character, Tom King, has just retired early and plans to leave England and return to his unspecified home. He has arranged a surprise for his two daughters: his mortgage is now paid off and he intends to divide the house between them. The equivalent of Shakespeare's love-test is provided by the toast which Tom proposes to his adopted country. Linda, a polished Goneril/Regan emotionally crippled by society's rejection of black people, goes along with him, but Susan refuses. Plain-speaking and loving, she is a nurse who has had to watch the NHS crumbling around her, and she refuses to express solidarity with a country where money seems more important than lives.

Enraged, Tom gives the house to Linda, and she and her slurp boyfriend plan to get rich quick through a local redevelopment scheme. Tom stoggers off to his heath, the shunting yard of Stratford (E15) etatim—only one of many Shakespearean puns and allusions in the play. Here he meets his Fool, Jimmy, another victim of family reliance; he is a Scot with a pathological and inexplicably stressed inability to find the whipper he lent three years ago, and with a sharp line in anti-Tory wisecracks. Tom is refused entrance to his house by Linda and quickly deteriorates into a tramp, only saved from isolation and despair by Jimmy and Susan. He still plans to leave England, so the moves, like Tom and Tim o fool"—and his inarticulate agony.

Black Lear, like its Shakespearean original, tries to explore extreme states of the soul, and adds extreme political situations which Barrie Keefe sees as analogous. It's an imperfect play but one remembers its anger, its sharp eye for social comedy as well as catastrophe, and some powerful acting.

Polish publishers

By George Theiner

"NOWA is the largest unofficial publishing house in Poland. Its aim is to make available titles which would otherwise be suppressed by the state publishing industry. The wider aim is to reassert the values of truth, freedom and honesty on which all intellectual activity depends."

With these words, Poland's remarkable independent publishing house introduced itself for the first time to a Western audience at last week's London Book Fair. Visitors to the fair, held on October 5-7 at Grosvenor House, were able to see some of the 100 titles NOWA has managed to produce in the four years of its existence. They include novels by leading Polish authors (Andrzejewski, Konwicki, Brandys), poetry by Wiktor Woroszylski, Czeslaw Miłosz and Jerzy Ficowski, books on the democratic opposition by Jacek Kuroń, essays on Eurocommunism, and statements by Catholic intellectuals on anti-Semitism. Foreign writers are also well represented, with Polish translations of *The Tin Drum*, Aniouet *Farm* and of books by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bohumil Hrabal, Ossip Mandelstam and Joseph Brodsky, as well as the selected works of T. G. Masaryk, the philosopher who became the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia.

Working under unimaginably difficult conditions, the director of NOWA, Mirosław Chojecki, and his friends and associates have produced all this—and two literary journals, Plus and *Zapis*—the total print number a staggering 100,000 copies. Having no access to presses, they print on ancient duplicators; constantly harassed by the secret police. In June, Chojecki and a colleague were arrested on a trumped-up charge and given a suspended 18-month sentence—the leniency due, at least in part, to vigorous protests from abroad.

Chojecki's courageous defiance of free literature has gained NOWA friends and admirers in the West. It was the editor of *The Bookseller* who originally suggested that they should be invited to the Frankfurt Book Fair, where they exhibited this month. *Index* on *Censorship*, who now print Zapis for the Poles, asked the management of the London Book Fair to give NOWA a free stand, which they very generously did, thus scoring a notable first.

Milosz and the Nobel Prize

By George Schöpflin

The life and work of the 1980 Nobel laureate, Czeslaw Miłosz, illuminate one of the central aspects of the Polish literary tradition. Miłosz's concerns are the role of the intellectual in society, his responsibility towards it and his political function in it, particularly at a time when institutions are shattered beyond repair. The upheavals that Miłosz has experienced in his own lifetime, and which he has distilled into an elusive, often abstract but rewarding mode of expression, have left a deep imprint on his contribution to literature.

Miłosz's background is full of cultural contradictions. He was born in 1911 in Szetejnie, then Tsarist Russia, to a partly Polish, partly Lithuanian family, and was brought up in the multinational milieu of Wilno (Vilnius), something which left him inoculated against nationalism. In his house he could only identify himself with the paradoxical opening line of the Polish national epic, *Pan Tadeusz*, "Lithuania my country", written by Adam Mickiewicz, another native of the region.

The cultural, moral and political uncertainties that Miłosz lived through culminated in the Second World War, which he spent mostly in Warsaw. His experiences there and what he built out of them found expression in his novel *The Usurpers* (1955, published in an English translation in 1966). In this book he sought clarity in the moral and intellectual confusion that attended the destruction of Warsaw and the subsequent forcible remoulding of Polish culture after the Communist takeover.

Despite his initial sympathies for radical change, Miłosz recognized that there was no place for a writer of his sensibilities under socialist realism, and in 1951 he left his post as Polish cultural attaché in Paris to remain in the West thereafter. In his most influential and most overtly political book, *The Captive Mind* (1953), he deftly analysed the process by which intellectuals subordinated their aspirations and independence of thought to the Communist revolution. His deals, especially with the problem of where compromise ends and travail begins, and so with his standing. His message is one of pessimism tinged with hope—intellectual has at hand the means of transcending his betrayal.

In his later work, Miłosz searching at Berkeley, California, has tended to concentrate on literature and his own past. In his literary criticism, for example, *Emperor of the Earth, Modes of Eccentric Vision* (1977), he ranges Russian, Polish and western sources, something he is uniquely placed to do. Miłosz regards his poetry as his most durable contribution, and it is translated into English by himself, and it enjoys quite a following in Poland, despite never being published there since his emigration. Miłosz is the third Pole to win the Nobel prize for literature (the others have been Sienkiewicz and Reymont) and his message is undoubtedly the subtlest and the most thoughtful of the three.

Writers who harness the lack of publishing outlets for new work and find it a little harder to speak of it if they consult the samizdat bibliography of the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, edited by Len Fulton and Ellen Ferber (568pp. Dustbooks, PO Box 100, Paradise, California CA 95969, USA. $17.95 cloth, $13.95 paper). The book lists over 3,000 small independent presses and magazines throughout the world—ranging from *Affordable Chic News*, "which covers sunset fashion publication includes short articles on wardrobe planning and personal appearance, particularly as they relate to saving money") to *Zero Circle* (an "anarchist magazine. Anarchist orientated. Unmanured and unapologetic. Will use any material without permission. Will willingly send a return material with a stamped addressed envelope but all Zero Circle published material is either misinformed [capital] or stolen"). Each listing for the nine hundred contains details of address, frequency of publication, price, average number of pages, production method and, always, a list of the favourite of high calibre with, inspiration value that "will help people to be published."

to the editor

Among this week's contributors

JOHN BARNADO is Professor of English at the University of Leeds.

T. J. BINYON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

JOSEPH BROODKY's latest book of poems, *A Part of Speech*, is reviewed in this week's *TLS*.

ANITA BROOKNER's biography of Jacques Louis David will be published later this year.

P. A. BRUNT is Camden Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford. He edited Arrian's *Anabasis* (Volume 1) in 1976.

ANTHONY BURGESS's new novel, *Earthly Powers*, will be reviewed next week in the *TLS*.

PETER BUOKE is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

RICHARD CALVOCORESSI is Research Assistant at the Tate Gallery. His *Magritte* was published last year.

LORD CHALFONT's *Montgomery of Alamein* was published in 1976.

PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, published this year.

RUSSELL DAVIES is television critic of *The Sunday Times*. He has recently written a libretto for Goldoni's *Lo Spezziale*.

TOM DISCH's most recent novel is *On Wings of Song*, 1979.

DAVID EGGAR's dramadaption of Nicholas Nickleby was recently performed by The Royal Shakespeare Company.

VICKI FEAVER's first collection of poems will be published next year.

ELAINE FEINSTEIN is the translator and editor of *Marina Tsvetayeva: Selected Poems*, 1974.

JEREMY GEFFOOD's books include *The Novel in Russia*, 1964, *Tolstoy: a Critical Anthology*, 1971, and *Pasternak*, 1977.

JOHN HEMMING's books include *The Conquest of the Incas*, 1970, and *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians*, 1978.

GEOFFREY HOSKING's *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Literature Since "Ivan Denisovich"* was published earlier this year.

MICHAEL HOWARD is the Regius Professor of History at Oxford.

J. P. KENYON's recent books include *Revolution Principles*, 1977, and *Stuart England*, 1978.

STEPHEN KOSE's books include *Nonconformity and Modern British Politics*, 1975, and *Asquith*, 1978.

OWEN LATTIMORE's books include *From China Looking Outward*, 1964.

BARBARA LEVICK's books include *Tiberius the Politician*, 1976.

DAVID RUDGWAY is joint editor of *Italy Before the Romans*, 1979.

A. H. T. LEVI is the editor of *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages* and in *the Early Renaissance*, 1970.

KARL LEYSER is the author of *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 1979.

DEREK MAHON's *Poems 1962-1978* was published earlier this year.

NORMAN MALCOLM's books include *Dreaming*, 1959, and *Memory and Mind*, 1977.

FERDINAND MOUNT's most recent novel, *The Clique*, was published in 1978.

LEON O BROIN's most recent book is *Revolutionary Underground: the Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858-1924*, 1976.

DAVID PAPINEAU is the author of *Theory and Meaning*, 1980.

JACQUELINE PEARSON's *Tragedy and Tragicomedy in the Plays of John Webster* was published last month.

VIOLET POWELL's most recent book is *Margaret, Countess of Jersey*, 1978.

GRAHAM REYNOLDS's books include *Constable, The Natural Painter*, 1965, and *A Concise History of Watercolour Painting*, 1972.

DAVID ROBINSON is Professor of French at Durham University.

CAROL RUMENS's most recent collection of poems is *A Necklace of Mirrors*, 1979.

GEORGE SCHÖPFLIN is a lecturer in East European Political Institutions at the London School of Economics and the School of Slavonic Studies.

HUGH SETON-WATSON's books include *Nations and States*, 1972, and *The Imperialist Revolutionaries*, 1978.

J. B. STRANE's books include *Morlowe: a Critical Study*, 1964.

SIR JOHN SUMMERSON is Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

JONATHAN SUMPTION's books include *Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1978.

GEORGE THEINER is Assistant Editor at *Index on Censorship* and has translated widely from the Czech.

D. M. THOMAS's translation of Anna Akhmatova's collection of poems, *Way of All the Earth*, was published last year.

JENNIFER UGLOW is the editor of *Essays on Literature and Art by Walter Pater*, 1975.

JOHN WHITWORTH's collection of poems, *Unhistorical Fragments*, was published by Secker and Warburg earlier this year.

DUDLEY WILSON is Professor of French at Durham University.

To subjugate the Slavs

By Karl Leyser

ERIC CHRISTIANSEN :
The Northern Crusades
The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier 1100-1525
273pp. Macmillan. £12.50 (Paperback, £4.95).
0 333 26243 3

How did it come about that the eastwards expansion of Saxons, Danes and Swedes during the Middle Ages, the opening up of the Baltic regions and linking them with Western Europe, was managed under the banners of the crusading movement, endowed with privileges and spiritual benefits only Rome could grant? It happened in 1147 when St Bernard of Clairvaux responded to a certain reluctance of the East-Saxon nobles to embark on his Mediterranean expedition by sponsoring one of their own into the nearby Slav lands.

Eric Christiansen's splendid book deals with this startling development and its profound and often tragic consequences for the Baltic world throughout the Middle Ages and far beyond. Before he begins his story he gives his readers a brilliant portrait of what the Baltic regions were like on the eve of this massive, ruthless and technically well-prepared invasion. Advances in ship-building, weaponry, clothing, tools and building enabled the Latins from the twelfth century onwards to cross frontiers hitherto impenetrable for them thanks to the severity of climate, forest, swamp and communications. It now became possible to advance the boundaries of agriculture, trade and fishing and to exploit, if not to subjugate, the hunting and trapping peoples living on the other side.

In St Bernard's call to arms the heathen nations were threatened with destruction if they did not convert. Before that the wars fought by Ottonian and Salian emperors to defend or to enlarge their frontiers beyond the Elbe-Saale river line, to subjugate Slavonic peoples and to exact tributes from them, had already sported a Christian purpose. Emperors and not only they, but other rulers as well, had a duty to protect churches against heathen attacks and to extend the reach of Christianity, if possible. Slav peoples, once subjugated and ruled by Saxon margraves rather than their own dynasties, could not be allowed to remain pagans. Conversion was part of the programme of Saxon occupation between Elbe and Oder until it collapsed in a wave of triumphant Slav risings in 983. New bishoprics had been founded and endowed in this region but there was little attempt to win converts by the slow process of persuasion in which they might participate. Much of what happened in the tenth century was already symptomatic of the crusade although that concept did not yet exist. Charlemagne, it was said, had preached Christianity to the continental Saxons with an iron tongue but the inner process of conversion was brought about by the willing participation of the Saxon aristocracy in monastic foundations, the new literary culture and above all the importation of saints' relics. Belief in their wonder-working powers could be propagated even among resentful and brooding pagan populations in remote with their heathen cults. Here was a shadowy zone of persuasion.

In Schleswig and along the eastern Baltic shores the methods employed remained harsh. They were akin to what we associate with the behaviour of a colonial power out for profit and pashions for its representatives. From the mid-twelfth century onwards the crusade became the dominant mode of invasion, subjection, expulsion and exploitation of the Slav, Baltic and Finno-Ugrian peoples settled east of the Elbe, round the Bay of Riga and the Gulf of Finland. Mr Christiansen's is a stark and bleak story of aggression against pagans and "schismatics" (orthodox Russian Christians), told with consummate skill. Whereas the crusades to sustain Outremer were or less collapsed with the fall of Acre in 1291, those to Prussia, Livonia, Finland and against Novgorod really got under way in the fourteenth century and, as Christiansen his no difficulty in showing, attracted the nobility of Western Europe in large numbers for seasonal campaigns over appallingly difficult country. There were winter and summer expeditions year after year.

Conditions had to be just right to fight this Hundred Years War against the Lithuanians: in winter it had to be cold enough for the routes to remain passable but not too cold for a man to be unable to relieve himself in the open air. The Lithuanians set only learnt to use the weapons of their German adversaries but their heathen religion became, if anything, a more efficacious creed of resistance. There was no reason to change faiths. The balance of material success remained too equal in the embattled societies, and, with the advent of cannon, it even tilted in favour of the Lithuanians because they could transport their bombards down river which was easier than the other way about.

It was a war on two fronts, Livonia and Prussia, and the crusaders only acted as welcome muko-weights and reinforcements to the permanent, regular forces of the Latins, the knights of the Teutonic Order. Christiansen likes to call them monks, but their command structure and organization became something sui generis, something no other monastic order evolved, nor, for that matter the other military orders. Until the Lithuanians joined the Poles in the late fourteenth century, the Teutonic Knights dominated the war and the government of their conquests in Prussia and the far North but it is the virtue of this book to present an all-round vision of this huge area. Christiansen is no less inclusive and informative about the Swedish establishments in Finland, the wars against Novgorod and the Danes in Estonia than he is about the principalities and institutions of the Order. He is equally at home in the cultural make-up of all these conquerors, their historiography and their understandable passion for self-justification. Here the Order and its German clients, nobles, merchants, clerks, friars and monks, remained the hardest task-master. The culture it spread, as Christiansen well observes, above all sought to prevent the assimilation of the conquerers by the native majority. It was ferociously self-protective and with the coming of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, very much on the defensive.

Here we must note the rise not only of a new military threat, superior to the Order's resources, but also a strident polemic which undermined the very foundations of its creed. Christiansen devotes an illuminating chapter to the debates of the Council of Constance (1414-18) where the procter of the king of Poland argued that infidels were not rightless as canonists had at one time contended. Here perhaps more might have been made of the uses to which Aristotle's *Politics* could be put in Western thought from the later thirteenth century onwards and above all Aquinas's teaching to the effect that the political order even among pagans and infidels was not unjustified.

Christiansen writes throughout with clarity and force and he is the master of the down-to-earth simile with a tang of the countryside. Here is an example: he calls the military orders "ivy on the oak that sprang from Cilicaux" and Prussia, before it became the main theatre of crusading warfare, was training ground "for further Jerusalem crusades as cubbing is for fox-hunting". He is not always so sure-footed, especially with the institutions and classes of German society which imprinted themselves so relentlessly on the Baltic regions, and there is perhaps a more fundamental question that should be raised. To see the Baltic Crusades springing chiefly from the preaching and outlook of St Bernard is to obscure something important about them and about crusades in general. St Bernard in his appeal of 1147 had not spoken of earthly rewards. The military objective of the Second Crusade, as far as it had one, was not conquest but the recovery of recently lost possessions. The shrot of Clairvaux offered his audience a spiritual bargain and they snapped it up avidly enough. St Bernard and his master, Pope Eugenius IIf, if anything suspected and distrusted the motives of those crusaders who would cross the Elbe rather than Hungary or the Mediterranean to fulfil their vows. But we must not forget that Pope Urban II in launching the First Crusade had at least mentioned treasure and earthly rewards as well as heavenly ones to those who listened to him at Clermont in 1095.

In the eyes of the crusaders the booty and lands to be gained were visible signs of divine favour, heaven's endorsement of the bloody work of battles and sieges. We cannot easily separate the spiritual from the material benefits and motives for taking the crusading vows. Christiansen says that it was not rightless as canonists had at one time contended. Here perhaps more might have been made of the uses to which Aristotle's *Politics* could be put in Western thought from the later thirteenth century onwards and above all Aquinas's teaching to the effect that the political order even among pagans and infidels was not unjustified.

Christiansen writes throughout with clarity and force and he is the master of the down-to-earth simile with a tang of the countryside. Here is an example: he calls the military orders "ivy on the oak that sprang from Citeaux" and Prussia, before it became the main theatre of crusading warfare, was training ground "for further Jerusalem crusades as cubbing is for fox-hunting". He is not always so sure-footed, especially with the institutions and classes of German society which imprinted themselves so relentlessly on the Baltic regions, and there is perhaps a more fundamental question that should be raised. To see the Baltic Crusades springing chiefly from the preaching and outlook of St Bernard is to obscure something important about them and about crusades in general. St Bernard in his appeal of 1147 had not spoken of earthly rewards. The military objective of the Second Crusade, as far as it had one, was not conquest but the recovery of recently lost possessions. The shrot of Clairvaux offered his audience a spiritual bargain and they snapped it up avidly enough. St Bernard and his master, Pope Eugenius IIf, if anything suspected and distrusted the motives of those crusaders who would cross the Elbe rather than Hungary or the Mediterranean to fulfil their vows. But we must not forget that Pope

The strategist of retreat

By Hugh Seton-Watson

MICHAEL and DIANA JOSSELSON :
The Commander
A Life of Barclay de Tolly
275pp. Oxford University Press. £12.95.
0 19-215854 6

The invasion of Russia by Napoleon in 1812 was the supreme epic event in the whole of Russia's history until Hitler tried the same thing in 1941, and perhaps still surpasses the later cataclysm in its impact on the Russian and the European imagination, if only because so much more is known about it, and because the literature to which it gave rise was of so much higher quality. The legend, composed in part of certain truth and in part of more or less plausible fantasy, is of heroic barbarians drawing deep into their territory the Great Army, recruited from all over Europe, as the Parthians drew the Roman legions of Crassus, and then, aided by hunger, wind and snow, engulfing and destroying it. The legend has two different versions, seen through French or Polish or Russian or English eyes, which give glory, blame or pity to different actors, but there is a family relationship between them.

The man who drove the enemy into the depths of Russia, who planned the retreat and the scorched earth strategy, was no Muscovite or Parthian, but a descendant of Scottish gentlefolk, the Barclays of Towie in Aberdeenshire. Two Barclay brothers came in 1621 as merchants to Rostock, the son of one of them moved in 1664 to Riga, and his son acquired two looted estates in Livonia. Thereafter the Barclays become part of the German landowning class of Russia's Baltic seaboard, serving generation after generation in the imperial army of the tsar. German in speech, Russian in patriotism but remembering still their origins. When in 1815 Field Marshal Count Michael Barclay de Tolly was created Sir Robert Barclay who had served under Wellington in India, he told him that "he was perfectly acquainted with his descent from the Barclays of Towie in Scotland, but that was the extent of his knowledge".

The strategy of retreat was justified by its results, but at the time it was highly unpopular in the Russian army, and the fact that its exponent had an outlandish foreign name and a German accent made things worse. The opposition was led by his equal in rank, General Prince Bagration, whose name was no less outlandish and who hailed from the vicinity of Perthia, but had no use for Perthian tactics, and exuded noisy Russian patriotism. Barclay was replaced as supreme commander by old Kutuzov, who proceeded to continue the retreat, including the abandonment of Moscow to Napoleon, and was then given the credit for the policy's ultimate success. Tsar Alexander I had a cooler judgment of the two men's merits, though he did not show the courage to stand up for Barclay at the height of his unpopularity. The Tsar later ordered that in front of the Kazan Cathedral in St Petersburg should stand twin statues of Kutuzov and Barclay, and this was done some years after the emperor and the two generals were dead. But the Kutuzov legend was then powerfully reinforced by Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and still later by the indefatigable authority of Stalin, who during the second Great Patriotic War revived the cult of Kutuzov to strengthen the spirit of resistance to Hitler.

Meanwhile there remained two tributes to Barclay's memory. One was the portrait by the English painter George Dawe in the War Gallery of the Winter Palace, a tall impressive figure with a haunting face, expressing an inexplicable combination of fortitude and sorrow; it was this portrait which inspired the second tribute, the poem "The Commander" (*polkovodets*) by Russia's greatest poet, which more than any earlier or later judgment forms the *omnude honorable* of the Russian nation to a great leader. The title of the poem was most appropriately taken for the title of his biography by Michael Josselson, himself a native of Estonia who became an American citizen. In an appendix he includes an English translation of Pushkin's words. It is a sadness that the author died within a month of completing the text, but gratitude is due, from all persons interested in Russian and in Napoleonic history, to his widow and her friends who ensured the publication of this excellent study.

Barclay was born in 1761, and from the age of fifteen pursued a regular military career. In 1787, as a lieutenant in a Jaeger corps, he had his first experience of active service, in the war against Turkey, in the army of Potemkin and under the immediate command of Lieutenant-General Prince Victor-Amedeus of Anhalt-Bernburg, to whom for the rest of his life he felt a special debt of gratitude, as a model of the military virtues and as an inspiring and encouraging commanding officer. His first important action was in the siege of Ochakov in August 1788. In 1790 he was transferred to Finland, the theatre of war with Sweden, in which Anhalt-Bernburg was mortally wounded, bequeathing his sword to Barclay on his deathbed. In 1792 he took part in the invasion of Poland, and two years later in the suppression of Kosciuszko's rising which ended with the sack of Praga by Suvorov's army, in which he served. Under Emperor Paul, he was made commander successively of two Jaeger regiments stationed in St Petersburg and to March 1799, promoted to major-general. In the war of 1805 he was in command of the advance guard of General Bennigsen's army, delayed on the Prussian border in expectation of Prussia's promised entry into the war, which was indefinitely postponed, and so he was not present at Austerlitz. In the war of 1806 however, in Prussian Poland, he took part in the battles of Pultusk and Preussisch-Eylau and was severely wounded in the second of these.

His next major task was in the war with Sweden in Finland, in which he distinguished himself by leading his men across the frozen Kvarken Straits and back in March 1809. This brought him promotion to full general and the post of commander-in-chief and governor of Finland, which he held for the rest of the year. His own Lutheran upbringing made it easier for him then for Orthodox Russians to understand the Swedish Finlander political class, and he made himself respected and liked. At the beginning of 1810, however, he was brought back to St Petersburg to be Minister of War. In this office he did his best to reorganize military administration and to prepare Russia's defences for the conflict with France which was more and more obviously approaching, but too little had been achieved before Napoleon struck.

Josselson convincingly describes Barclay's leadership of the retreat in 1812, his overall strategic conception, his extraordinary calm in the face of mortal danger to his army, the growing resentment among senior officers, and the hysterical denunciations by Bagration, who did not scruple to call Barclay a traitor. Though replaced by Kutuzov, it was Barclay who effectively commanded the Russian army at the battle of Borodino, exposing himself in his full general's uniform as his rudp from one point to another of the battlefield rallying his forces, seeing the battle as a whole and issuing orders when needed, impressing all by his composure and courage. It was widely believed that in bitterness at his disgrace he was seekiug death, but he survived unscathed, while his enemy Bagration was mortally wounded. Kutuzov, who seems to have remained strangely passive at some distance from the fighting, took the credit, but Barclay, in the words of the Russian military historian Glinka, quoted here, "regalued the confidence of the whole army" and "triumphed over his own feelings". After retreating through Moscow, he was given sick leave by Kutuzov and made his way slowly home, where he was able in three months to recover from fever and his old wounds. He thus had no part in the pursuit of Napoleon out of Russia. He returned to service in mid-February as commander of the Third Western Army, distinguished himself at the battle of Bautzen and was appointed Russian Commander-in-Chief in May. Less than a year later he entered Paris on March 31 in Field Marshal's uniform, riding behind the Tsar and the King of Prussia. The Tsar had made him a Count on the battlefield of Leipzig, and he was named a Prince in 1815. He died three years later, prematurely exhausted by wounds and fatigue.

In his last years Barclay had his full share of glory, and basked in the favour of the Emperor, who had always admired but had not always supported him. But his greatest historical merit, still too little recognised, was in the retreat and at Borodino. In this he shares in a sense the fate of the Tsar, for Alexander, too deserves and has not received enormous credit. Alexander's role was not heroic but it was he who made two vital decisions: to reject all overtures for peace from Napoleon (though Kutuzov was tempted), and not to stop the advance Napoleon was out of Russia, but to pursue him to his own capital. This book, meticulously researched and clearly presented, based on archives in Finland, Germany and France as well as on massively published Russian documents, and secondary literature, is an impressive achievement. One hopes that it will bring wider appreciation among historians of a man who must be accounted one of the greatest of Europe's soldiers.

The need to be human

By Elaine Feinstein

MARINA TSVETAEVA :
A Captive Spirit
Selected Prose
Edited and translated by J. Marin King
159pp. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis. $22.50 (paperback, $7.50).
0 88233 352 6

Tsvetaeva
A Pictorial Biography
Edited by Ellendea Proffer
Translations by J. Marin King
159pp. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis. $18.50 (paperback, $10).
0 88233 358 5

A Captive Spirit and *Tsvetaeva: a Pictorial Biography*, taken together, give a portrait of one of the finest, kindliest and toughest European poets of this century. This volume of extraordinary prose (and there is a third as much again, not yet collected, of the same quality) was written at a time when Tsvetaeva's life had become an unremitting struggle to sustain a subsentient household and two children. She was not a ruthless woman, though we have her daughter's word that "she was able to subordinate any concerns to the interest of her work. I insist on it." She mended, shopped and cooked. Her stamina was astounding. All she needed, to be able to write, was coffee and a cigarette. Then she sat at her desk as if she were nailed to it. And her prose was written with the same pressure and linguistic energy as her poetry.

The pictorial biography illustrates a story which is overwhelming, even bewildering, as a catalogue of human loss. The initial, vital impression of Marina Tsvetaeva herself. She was not a beauty. "Talking about looks in my case is foolish—appearance is so very much and so obviously not the issue." She was a willful, restless woman, and her face changed almost from day to day; at one time more so than in the 1930s, when she is one week hawk-faced and shabby in a Paris street, and the next sleek and brown in a swimsuit. And deserves congratulations for these two books which help to put Tsvetaeva to her rightful place alongside Pasternak, Mandelstam and Akhmatova.

To know her story is to understand why it has taken so long for this to happen. Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva, daughter of a Professor of the Arts at Moscow University, had a rich and serious childhood, and she turns to it often and lovingly in these memoirs. Her mother was the most powerful presence in it; she died when Marina was fourteen. At Voloshin's dacha in Koktebel, Marina met the seventeen-year-old orphan, Sergei Efron, whom she married in 1912. The photographs show Efron first as a tender-faced boy with a certain weakness at his mouth; and then as an eagerly responsive officer in cadet uniform when war broke out. The two years between of Marina's whole life. When the Revolution began, Sergei joined the White Army; and that step decisively marked both their lives. At the time of the Moscow famine, Tsvetaeva put her younger daughter into a state orphanage; and the child died of hunger there in February, 1920. In 1922 Tsvetaeva, after five years' separation from her husband, heard Efron was in Prague, and at once decided to join him, taking her surviving daughter. That decision took her into nearly twenty years of exile.

At first, Tsvetaeva was welcomed by the other émigrés, who admired her early poetry. But her dress, manner and lack of domestic graces soon alienated most of them; and her isolation increased she came to depend more and more on correspondence, especially with Pasternak. She needed to know that he at least would be glad to receive her poems: "I shall send you my poems and everything that is mine"; and she was sustained by his praise: "What remarkable poems you write. . . . How painful that at the moment you are greater than I am. . . . You are a disgraceful great poet."

But Pasternak was to know severe difficulties of his own, and by the time of Tsvetaeva's records sorrowing in a letter to Anna Teskova, his isolation as a poet was total: "I am here without readers."

Marina Tsvetaeva, 1912, from Tsvetaeva : A Pictorial Biography.

Russia without books." The behaviour of the émigrés was not surprising. She had sided against them over Mayakovsky; she had criticized the powerful figure of Bunin; and she remained in correspondence with poets inside Russia. Yet what ultimately sealed her unpopularity was not her making, Efron, the one-time White Officer, became a Soviet sympathizer; and though he was not exposed as an agent of the NKVD until 1937, the rumour of his allegiance contributed disastrously to her rejection.

Humanly, her situation was as bleak: her most intense experience of love in Prague had ended disastrously. Her marriage was no longer comfortably, though she continued to protect Efron. And her son, whom she idolized, grew (as the photographs show) into a sullen, rather self-centred young man, impatient with his mother's interests. Her daughter made her own decision in return to Russia. When Efron was forced to flee after Ignace Reiss's murder, there was little to hold Tsvetaeva in Paris, and she and her son Georgy returned to Russia in 1939. It was a disastrous misconclusion. She found Sergei sick and helpless. Both Tsvetaeva, and all the other members of her family, had to live under suspicion of working against the Soviet government. Her daughter Alya was arrested shortly after Tsvetaeva's arrival; Sergei, a month after that. When the Second World War came, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to Yelabuga, and there in 1941, conscious of the growing rift between even her much-loved son and herself, she hanged herself.

Yet Tsvetaeva was not of a suicidal temperament. Her scrappy notebook from the last year of her life makes that clear:

> I have a very cheerful nature. . . . I used to need very little in order to be happy. My own table. The health of my family. Any weather. And freedom. That is all. Life should rejoice in the happy man, should encourage him in this rare gift. Because it is from the happy man that happiness flows. It used to flow from me.

These essays bear witness to Tsvetaeve's love of life and generous humanity. Among the most poignant are those which form part of a family chronicle, notably "Mother and Music", which recalls Tsvetaeva's earliest memories of being rigorously disciplined to learn the piano. Her mother's talent was much more than a genteel accomplishment, and it had been frustrated; she set herself to give her child the opportunity she had missed, whether Marina wanted it or not. But even while she submitted to that loving tyranny, Tsvetaeva understood: "After a mother like that I had only one alternative—to become a poet."

She probably drew much of the strength she was to need later from submission to stern teaching. And certainly she learnt to think of art as lively before she was five years old.

> The piano is a sacred object . . . you must not put anything on it, not only feet, but even books. As far as newspapers—mother, with the undefined, lefty persistence of a martyr, every morning, without saying a word to father who invariably and innocently put them there, took them off the piano—swept them off—and who knows if it wasn't from this juxtaposition of the piano's mirror-like, ultimate cleanness and blackness with the disorderly and colorless rustling of newspaper, and from mother's simultaneously broad and pedantic gesture of revenge that arose my inconducible, intrinsically axiomatic conviction: newspapers are the Unclean, and all my hatred for them and all the newspaper world's reciprocating revenge. And if I ever die under a fence, at least I'll know why.

For all her vitality, Marina's mother was to die of the same disease as Professor Tsvetayeva's first wife: tuberculosis. Tsvetayeva recalls her last words spoken at the piano in the family dacha in Taruso in 1906; and from them it is clear how much Tsvetayeva drew from her mother's spirit:

> That was her last playing. Her last words in that newly added porch of fresh pine boards, shedded by that same jasmine, were:
>
> —I only regret music and the sun.
>
> Looking at the early pictures of Professor Tsvetayeva's blank face it is hard not to see something genuinely unfeeling in it. These essays, however, show him to be kindly, if withdrawn; absent-minded certainly, but tolerantly regarded. He appears for a moment, querulous and grumpy in a greenish-grey dressing gown, appalled at the necessity of spending so much money on gold-embroidery for the Tsar's opening of his Museum.

Aside from these sketches of her early life, there are several brilliant impressions of poets with whom Tsvetayeva's life had been interwoven. The most carefully wrought of these is the memoir of Max Voloshin. Voloshin was among the first to recognize Tsvetayeva's genius, and he did so with a wholehearted generosity that she was to remember for ever. No one was to treat her mature poems with the "worshipful care" given by him. At his house in Koktebel she met not only his magnificent mother, but also the young boy Efron whom she was to marry.

Marina was eighteen and Sergei seventeen when they first met on a deserted shore near Koktebel. The shore was strewn with small pebbles, and Marina had been collecting them when Sergei began to help her. He was a particularly slender boy, not so much handsome as sadly and meekly beautiful, with astonishingly huge eyes covering half his face. Marina at once sensed the strength of his need to be loved. With her instant reckless ability to make decisions, Marina vowed: "If this boy finds and gives me a cornelian I shall marry him". Voloshin disapproved of the marriage.

Tsvetayeva's intention was to present Voloshin as someone, like herself, dedicated as much to defending Soviet writers from White detractors as Whites from Soviet authorities; that is, as a genuine humanist. The personality of Voloshin as he comes out from the essay has a magical protective quality, like a benevolent animal. And indeed, among the listed objects Tsvetayeva chose to take away with her when she left Russia was, as her daughter Alya records, "a heavy porcelain plate which showed a king of the beasts with the face of Max Voloshin".

The other detailed portrait is of Andrei Bely, whom she had met, once, through a childhood friend; and whom she grew to know well only in her few weeks in Berlin in 1922, while waiting to go to Prague. This memoir is a more fragmented, but in a way more brilliant piece of work. When Tsvetayeva met Bely in the Praguedielo café, she at once recognized his hopeless other-worldliness; and since she was always at her best with those whose nerves were as raw as her own, she was able to deal gently with him at a time when the break-up of his marriage to Asya Turgeneva had brought him to the edge of madness. Bely realized her strength, and wrote to her:

> My kind, kind, kind, kind Marina Tsaitova . . . during these last particularly difficult, burdensome days you again sounded the only true note towards me . . . a tender, tender, remarkable note of trust. There are miracles after all!

Much of this memoir is comic, necessarily; but it is always tender.

To a letter to Pasternak, Tsvetayeva recorded her disappointment with most meetings in real life. They were like "Futeheads knocking together. Two walls. You just cannot penetrate. A meeting should be an arch. Then the meeting is above. Foreheads tilted back!" But Bely was the exception to that description, perhaps just because he himself always moved about in a dream, and it was almost impossible to relate to him in the flesh.

The most impressionistic of the literary memoirs describes an evening in 1916 in Petersburg, where Tsvetayeva met Mandelstam and Kuzmin, and breathed in all the excitement of being with people who loved poetry as much as she did. Probably the single most modern piece of writing is the strange, never explicit, account of a childhood relationship with the devil, who lives upstairs in her half-sister's room, along with all the books her mother has forbidden her to read.

And what is missing? I suppose I missed most that extraordinary piece of writing "Art in the Light of Conscience" in which Tsvetayeva pleads out so clearly what she sees as her duty as a poet, which can only be to poetry itself. This conviction did not spring from fanciful eccentricities; she had understood what damage must come from the utilitarian hope that art can do civic good. And she makes no grandiloquent claims for poetry:

> To be a human being is more important, because it is more needed . . . The doctor and the priest are humanly more important.

But poetry was her work and "she wanted not exchange her work for any other. . . . Only such as I will be held responsible at the Judgement of Conscience. But if there is a Judgement Day of the *word*, at that I am guiltless."

It is indeed to the *word*—as pure in her prose as in her poems—that Tsvetayevo gave so much of her energy in the last decade of her life. She might say in a letter to Anna Teskova from Clamart on November 24, 1933:

> I write almost no poems, and this is why: I cannot limit myself to one poem; they come in families, circles like whirlpools. . . . I cannot write my current prose pieces and poems both at the same time. . . .

But Tsvetayeva remained altogether true to herself, in every word she found. And we can only be grateful to J. Marin King for bringing this across to us in English.

My Mother and I Go to Restaurants

We press the button for 25
and look at ourselves going up in mirrors.
The crystals jiggle on the chandelier—
we're not to notice.
On the 25th the fountain is gracefully spraying.
The magazine shop sells wooden dolls
as big as a child and as expensive.
We are seated at a round table
with white linen cloth, silver forks,
statuesque goblets next to an invisible card
printed on parchment that says
in wedding invitation letters "Do not be vulgar".
We try hard to obey:
our napkins on our laps, voices turned down,
we order a little dish of dessert and coffee.
Our waitress sees through us
—we are not on our way to the airport, flying to Greece.
My mother and I go to restaurants
imagining what it would be like
if we belonged in them.

Julie O'Callaghan

Civilization on horseback

By Owen Lattimore

S. JAGCHID and P. HYER:
Mongolia's Culture and Society
46bpp. Folkstone: Dawson. £12.50.
0 7129 0892 7

Slowly, that ill-defined but earnestly striving character, the informed General Reader, is being given access to more solid stuff about the Mongols and their history than verbal Hollywoodisms about a Chingis Khan who arose inaccountably from nowhere to lead "savage hordes" (with the implication of overwhelming numbers) out of the Gobi Desert (with the implication of a howling wilderness). In fact, "gobi" in Mongol does not mean "desert", for which there is a separate word. The Mongols in their great campaigns normally won with smaller numbers against far larger numbers: they won, precisely, because they were not ravening savages, storming blindly ahead; they were the best equipped, most intelligently trained, highly disciplined soldiers of their time. They were guilty of atrocities, true, but these were not a tradition of their own tribal wars: they were a technique of genocidal terrorism endemic in the "civilized" Central Asian oasis-states, which the Mongols learnt and took over when conquering those states. (The slaughter of colossal numbers is also recorded, by the Chinese themselves, as characteristic of the period of "warring kingdoms" out of which grew their own "civilized", unified empire.)

As for Chingis Khan, he was unlettered but not unmotored. He came from a family which had once enjoyed something like royal power, from which it had fallen. In such a family (and we have other examples in the history of nomads), a knowledge of statecraft, as well as of the military art, was passed on from generation to generation. Chingis began by reuniting the Mongols, not uniting them for the first time. He put back together tribes which had fallen apart in the decline of a former "kingdom on horseback" which had called itself Khamag Mongol. "All the Mongols". He never fought a campaign without careful political preparations and alliances, and he never broke an alliance without first making moves that convinced his allies (and potential new allies), that he was acting for the greater good of the greatest number.

Because they throw a great deal of light on topics and problems of this kind, it is to be hoped that Sechin Jagchid and Paul Hyer will be widely read. By the same token, it is sad to record that the reader in search of more will have a hard time with their inadequate bibliography and index. They rightly pay tribute to the great thirteenth-century *Secret History of the Mongols*, but fail to mention that it is available in Japanese, Russian and German translation, in partial French and English translations (by Paul Pelliot and Arthur Waley) and is currently coming out in Australia, by instalments, in an "every-day" English version by Igor de Rachewiltz. There is also a regrettably thin citation of sources in French and German, not to mention the vast literature in Russian and the even more copious output, year by year, from the Mongolian People's Republic. The book is intended for the general reader, but even so, one of the purposes of the authors is to shuw that the Mongols were never as barbarous as they were represented to be by the peoples whom they conquered. It is well to remind the reader that in medieval Europe, as in later-lingering medieval Mongolia, the vast majority of people were ignorant and superstitious; and in late-medieval Mongolia, as in Europe, amidst the squalor and lives "brutish, ignorant and short", there were always a few men of astonishingly wide and deep learning.

Of the authors of this book Jagchid is a Kharchin (he uses the older transcription, Khorachin) from the south-eastern corner of Inner Mongolia. The Kharchin were among the earliest Mongols to serve as auxiliaries of the Manchus in the conquest of China, culminating in 1644. As a consequence, they became involved in bureaucratic administration (especially of other Mongols who came later under Manchu rule), and together with the Manchus were far more deeply transformed by Chinese cultural influences than were the northern Mongols, ultimately a more free-roaming, pastoral, nomadic people. The proximity of Inner Mongolian nationalism that they had ever permitted when they were in power.

Paul Hyer, the other author, is a Professor at Brigham Young University, a Mormon institution in Utah where he has been the principal inspirer in developing a centre of Mongolian studies of growing importance. Like Jagchid, his principal field contacts and sources of information have been Inner Mongolian. The result of the collaboration of these two scholars is that all general statements in their book about "the Mongols" invariably reflect a review of all the Mongol peoples as seen from Inner Mongolia. There are also echoes of two dubious themes: a "root-cause" pan-Mongol romanticism and a geopolitical lament for the Mongols as doomed to be overwhelmed by the Chinese from the south and the Russians from the north. Both concepts need to be sharply and realistically assessed.

"Pan"-this or "pan"-that is always a fringe phenomenon. Kemal Atatürk wanted to consolidate the Turkish nation in Anatolia. "Pan-Turkism" was a romantic, steadily weakening movement by a few defeated politicians. Turkmen, Uzbegs and so on for the "overwhelming" Mongols, a massive demographic distinction needs to be made. In the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region of Chiou, there are only forty Chinese for every Mongol; the Mongolian People's Republic after sixty years of close ties with the Soviet Union, cares, apart from technicians and experts who come on contract for three or five years, perhaps about 1 per cent of the population. Jagchid and Hyer observe that American properties. A comparison of history is always a "right-and-left" thing: there is a distinction to be made. It is quite possible to honour Mongolian Mongols that "a Chinese Communist takeover in Outer Mongolia, now the Mongolian People's Republic, the place that one hears the "stirrings of the Revolution". As a veteran of the Mongol Partisans of 1921 put it, in this reviewer: "Of course we couldn't have won without Soviet aid; and in the 1930s and 1940s we'd have gone under to Japan except for Soviet backing. But it was our revolution. The Russians didn't make it; they backed it."

With these reservations, however, the book is to be recommended as that long-suffering general reader looked up in the newspaper records of the 1930s and 1940s under its Chinese abbreviation of Te Wang or De Wang: Prince De. When that movement was overwhelmed by the Chinese Communist victory, Jagchid emigrated to Taiwan, where fruitfully the Kuomintang, no longer bothered with problems of ruling Mongols, allowed a more free expression of Inner Mongolian nationalism that they had ever permitted when they were in power.

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The sea, Sumerian-style

By John Hemming

THOR HEYERDAHL:
The Tigris Expedition
326pp. George Allen and Unwin. £7.95.
0 04 572023 1

Thor Heyerdahl has made his reputation by building ancient sailing craft, navigating them across great distances of open sea, and thus demonstrating theoretically that early man was capable of great maritime migrations. His splendid adventures have moved backwards in time—from Kon-Tiki, the raft that sailed across the Pacific to prove that South Americans could have reached Polynesia; to the Ra reed boat that crossed the Atlantic to show that man could have reached America from Africa many centuries before Columbus; and now to the very cradle of Western civilization for the most impressive of all his crafts and the most satisfying of his theories.

This new venture, the building of a reed boat in Mesopotamia, started with few preconceived theories. That Heyerdahl simply wished to prove that the Sumerians were capable of building seagoing boats from the herdi reeds that grew in such profusion in the Tigris marshes. But as the voyage progressed and the reed boat Tigris proved triumphantly seaworthy, Heyerdahl almost stumbled upon convincing answers to a series of archaeological problems. The result is an excellent mix of mariner's yarn and historical detective work.

The first task was to build the boat, with no more guidance than rough rock engravings from upper Egypt, incisions on Sumerian seals and the author's own observation of reed boats in different parts of the world. The marsh Arabs were masters of the reeds among which they lived; but Heyerdahl felt that the only people capable of shaping reed bundles into a crescent shape were Aymara Indians from Lake Titicaca. So Bullivian and Iraqis worked together—with no common language other than the mutual admiration of skilled craftsmen. Thor Heyerdahl added his own considerable boat-building experience and the results of tests at South-ampton University and practical experiments in the Tigris. The product was a rush-like catamaran, with thirty-eight mighty bundles of reeds wrapped in sixty-foot long woven reed mats, all sweeping up at each end like the crescent moon rising over an equatorial horizon.

Much of the excitement of the Tigris adventure came from testing such a novel craft of unproven materials on little-known waters. Heyerdahl had assembled an experienced crew of ten men from almost as many countries. But it took all their combined skills to devise ways to rig and sail Tigris. There were early adventures when the reed boat coasted along the banks of the Tigris with its steering oars ploughing the river mud, so when she ran onto reefs off Kuwait and had to be towed, in an exhaustion, by Arab smugglers and a friendly Russian merchant ship. But the lessons were learned and the navigating technique modified, and before long Tigris was sailing close to the wind, reaching difficult destinations, and riding out fearsome monsoon storms. Even dismasted and with steering oars inactive, this reed vessel could weather seas that would have sunk a plank hull. Tons of tons of water would break over the roft; but the fruthing water disappeared in an instant through the reed bundles, as Tigris bobbed up like a surfacing submarine.

With his ship still proudly afloat after five months at sea, Thor Heyerdahl discovered the theories of Arnos Salonen, the Finnish authority on Mesopotamian watercraft, who had been sure that reed boats could not sail beyond the rivers. By venturing forth so boldly, Heyerdahl gave the lie to another accepted wisdom. Tigris was often in danger of being smashed or grounded on hostile coasts; her crew could relax only when they were far out to sea in their unsinkable boat. The author could declare with justification:

> How utterly illusory it was for armchair anthropologists to believe and teach that pre-European voyages were possible only so long as the navigator stayed in a mainland creek, and that ocean crossings were impossible before the days of the Spanish caravels. Nowhere is the sea worse and the problems more acute than where rocks are or where waves and currents encounter shores and shallows. To hug a coast can be the most demanding task for any primitive voyager.

Leonard Woolley revealed that the Sumerians had arrived from the south with knowledge of metals and stoneworking they could not have been acquired in the marshlands of Mesopotamia. Deciphered Sumerian tablets dealt with copper imported from Dilmun to Ur, and the place-names Makan and Meluhha occur frequently in Sumerian inscriptions. Within a few days of leaving the Iraqi rivers, Tigris was at Bahrain, where Geoffrey Bibby showed Heyerdahl his excavations in the island's thousands of burial mounds and a north-coast city site from the third millennium BC. Bibby had convinced Heyerdahl that Bahrain must have been Sumerian Dilmun, with easy reach of ocean-going boats. The two archaeologists even found an aged Bahraini with a raft boat of palm stems.

It was almost chance that sent Tigris into Oman, a land closed to tourists; and still greater chance that brought her crew to Julfar, Ptolemy's emporium of ancient copper mines and a trading port that looked in Heyerdahl's mind's eye like a miniature Dilmun. This surely was Makan, the nearest source of copper to ancient Mesopotamia. The journey of that large bareboat boat could have carried the ore southwards through the Gulf. Elated by the success of their vessel, Tigris crew could in turn cast, to demonstrate a maritime link between Sumeria and the contemporary Indus Valley civilization at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Once in Pakistan, the explorers found about S. R. Rao's excavation of a huge brick dock, complete with sliding lock gates, at the Harappan civilization site of Lothal. Heyerdahl was also thrilled to find in the museum at Mohenjo-Daro a steatite seal with a small but unmistakable carving of a crescent-shaped reed boat. It seems likely that the Indus was Sumerian Meluhha.

A fitting last leg for Tigris would have been to reach Egypt. This was frustrated by political upheaval around the Horn of Africa. Afghanistan, theme of this book is the contrast between ancient Asian and modern folly. The shallow reed boat could reach parts of the Makran coast out of range of wheeled vehicles or even llamas. The tranquility of village communities in Oman or the Makran is contrasted with the bustle of offshore parts of the Gulf. At times, Tigris was alone in oceans teeming with fish; at other times she was in danger of being rammed by speeding tankers, rotted by chemical effluents, or buzzed by aircraft of the superpowers. Trapped in Djibouti by political barriers, Tigris's crew burned their beloved vessel as an act of protest: to their gallant voyage yielded practical solutions to various archaeological questions. It also led to this delightful book, exciting, informative and challenging in the true Heyerdahl tradition.

The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China: 1 326pp. Cambridge University Press. £5.75. 0 521 29037 7: is an abridgement by Colin A. Ronan of the original text of the first two volumes of Joseph Needham's work *Science and Civilisation in China*.

The Church military

By Jonathan Sumption

ANTONY BRIDGE:
The Crusades
314pp. Granada. £9.95.
0 246 11080 5

The crusaders have had a bad press in recent times. To the Victorians they epitome of manly Christian heroism, to the destructive marauders moved by fanaticism. An age which is embarrassed by muscular Christianity and colonial conquest is bound to feel misgivings when confronted by a combination of both.

In part this change of sentiment reflects a revival of interest in the crusaders' enemies. The Islamic societies of the Middle East are better known today than they were a hundred years ago, and although declining in the twelfth century, they can no longer be regarded as hordes of bloodthirsty savages led by the occasional honorary Christian like Saladin. Byzantium, the other great enemy of the crusaders, is now seen through the eyes of Sir Steven Runciman, not Gibbon, and is not to be dismissed as a society of mincing intriguers who had it coming to them.

Perhaps for these reasons it has become almost impossible to find a good popular history of the Crusades written in English: a history which does not chide Richard the Lionheart for deserting the government of his country for foreign adventure, which makes no apology for the bigoted insularity of the crusaders, and which revels in the epic quality of the story. Antony Bridge has now written such a book, although it is a sign of the times, and perhaps of his status as the Dean of Guildford, that he feels obliged to tut-tut from time to time when relating some acts of particular savagery: "If the general reader is horrified by the brutality of the times and if the Christian reader is appalled by what some of the Christians of the day did in the name of Christ, perhaps the horror of the one and the dismay of the other are signs that . . . people have been changed a little by Christian faith and teaching over the centuries". Perhaps.

The Crusades may have been unedifying by modern standards, but in this respect they were no different from other medieval wars, or indeed from any other wars. In the history of Christianity what matters about the Crusades was the effect which they had on the spiritual life of the time. It was very far from wholesome. Unscrupulous devices were necessary in order to recruit soldiers for a succession of crusading armies, among a knightly class which found peace more genial and war more profitable in Europe.

The crusading indulgence, which was the most important of these, encouraged an attitude to religion which was mathematical, not spiritual. Like many of the expedients used to man and pay for the Crusades, indulgences also had the effect of centralizing the spiritual authority of the Church in the papacy, the principal cause of that disastrous hardening of the arteries which afflicted late medieval Catholicism. Other factors assisted these unwelcome developments, but their origin lay in a body of doctrine and ecclesiastical law devised for the Crusades.

Of these motives the contemporary chroniclers of the Crusades could not be aware, and Mr Bridge, whose elegant narrative is based on the chroniclers (and not much else) is content to share their ignorance. For him the Crusades were a heroic enterprise, well meant in general even if sometimes misguided in detail. It is a view entirely justified by the military and political history of the Crusades to which he has deliberately confined himself.

The result, although it does not pretend to new insights or original scholarship, is a readable and accurate account skilfully compressed into one volume, the best account of the subject for a general reader too idle to broach Runciman's three. It is illustrated by forty-eight well-chosen and magnificently reproduced colour-plates and sold at a low price, a rare combination of virtues on which the publishers should be congratulated.

The cadets and the creepers

By Anthony Burgess

JOHN G. BUTCHER:
The British in Malaya 1880-1941
The Social History of a European Community in Colonial South-East Asia
293pp. Oxford University Press. £13.95.
0 19 580419 8

Francis Light got Penang (now, as heretofore, Pulau Pinang) from the Sultan of Kedah in 1786; Stamford Raffles established a trading-post on Singapore Island in 1819; Malacca, or Melaka, became British through the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824. These three Malayan, now Malaysian, territories were for years to be known as the Straits Settlements. The lure of the tonk the British, following the Chinese, to the Malay sultanates of the hinterland. What began in blood—the assassination of the first Perak resident, J. W. W. Birch, in 1875—was to end with the establishment of a pacific multiracial society under British rulers who were termed advisers. That society is still moderately pacific without the British presence. The Malays, now called the *bumiputra* or sons of the soil, run an elective federal kingdom, impose the Malay language, or *bahasa Malaysia*, on a minority of Chinese and Indians, and bask in a prosperity of tin, rubber and oil which the British did much to establish. When the Japanese took over the Federation of Malaya in 1942 they found much to praise in the colonial system they briefly inherited—much too liberal, of course, but delightfully incorrupt; good roads, good hospitals, well-trained teachers quick to learn to instruct in the imperial tongue of Nippon.

John G. Butcher's purpose is to inquire into the manner of men these colonial British were. He is right to regard 1941 as the year of their sunset. The British who returned, somewhat shamefacedly, in 1945 presided over a compradore regime. I was myself in Malaya, as a colonial officer, to help with the handing over of power to a Malay cadre which, in the Malay College of Kuala Kangsar, I had tried to train in the ways of a world bigger than the river kampong (now called Kampung). The year of British withdrawal was fixed as 1957: one worked to that deadline. Up to the humiliating debâcle of 1942 the British in Malaya had no sense of an ending.

Apart from the box wallahs, or *orang perniaga*, British expatriates worked either in government or on the rubber estates. Somerset Maugham thought that the planters could be divided into two classes: "The greater number of them are tough and common man of something below the middle class, and they speak English with a vile accent, or broad Scotch. . . . There is another class of planter who has been to a public school and perhaps a university." This observation was inaccurate. The background of planter and civil servant alike was well-spoken middle-class: the vile accents were to be found among Tallyawmen and, later, notoriously, among the police lieutenants recruited from the Palestine Police who served during the Emergency of the 1950s.

The residents knew what they wanted of their Malayan Civil Service cadets as early as 1883: "What we require out here are young public school men—Cheltenhem, for preference—who have failed conspicuously at all bookwork and examinations in proportion as they have excelled at sports." As Resident of Perak, Swettenham "kept an eye out for men who would do credit to both the civil service and the state cricket team, which one sporting official judged as the equal of a good English county team". Oliver Marks, who performed brilliantly for a visiting Ceylon eleven, was at once urged to come and work for the Perak government.

As for the apprentice planters, or "creepers", the major qualification was negative—failure in become something else. The Kindersley Brothers, famous planters, had been plucked in the Army entrance examination; C. R. Harrison had not been up to the medical. Some creepers had grown tired of studying for medicine or professional competence in the violin; others had been insurcessful solicitors. In my time I have met on the rubber estates, or, more typically, moulin at the club bar, a planter who had played the guitar with Geraldo, one who had been shot at on his banana grove in South America, two who were surfeited with Ceylonese tea, three who had failed at ranching in the United States, one who had pipped his second MB seven times.

Planters and MCS men got on well enough together: they were of the same tastes as well as background and used the same jargon—*sauh, cuppat jalan* (one for the road), take a pew, damn good *makan* at Foo Ong's. There was jealousy sometimes about pay differentials, but both cadet and creeper tended to despise equally the richer tuan in *Frigidaires* or Ford cars. When it came to getting a room in a Rest House, the civil servant was able to show his muscle. He took pride in disledging a Dutch commercial traveller even when he was settled down for the night. In the white men's club it was understood (and still is, to judge from the Ipoh Club, July 1980) that the hairy legs and shorts of the visiting planter should not be juxtaposed to the pressed linen slacks of the government man. A snub room was frequently set aside as a rubber-man's bar.

Mr Butcher stresses the importance of the club in the lives of the expatriates. That it was a precious preserve where the British could get away from the naives and read the six-weeks-old magazines (never, of course, the *NLS* or the *New Statesman*) over a *pahit* or a *stengah* was not necessarily a gesture of fascicid racial superiority. If Chinese and Indians could not get into it, though the better-class Malays could, it was because of the need for an exiled Britisher to be relreshed with the illusion of drinking in his own culture, such as it was. After all, Chinese did not mix with Malays, nor Indians with either. An Englishman could not visit a Musical Gong Society, whatever that was. The virtue of the club as a centre of sequestration from the multi-racial hurly-burly is still recognized in independent Malaysia.

The great Selangor Club, or Spotted Dog, flourishes. It is a place where Indian and Chinese professionals speak English together over *stengahs* or Anchor beer. They play cricket, and a European cuisine is served. There are not many Malays, or *bumiputra*, about: the lawyers and real estate specialists see too many of them during the day. The Sultan, of course, is a different kind of *bumiputra*. At the little Idris Club in Kuala Kangsar, the official attitude to taking brown mistresses was always ambivalent. It let the side down, but a sleeping dictionary was the only way to learn the language. Mr Butcher is good on all this, and he gives such tables as one headed "Ethnicity of Women from whom European Men Treated at the Sultan Street Clinic Contracted Venereal Disease, 1927-1931". The girls of Siam were the great infectresses, but the Malays came a close second. The Japanese, who had regular medical inspections and lived in brothels cleaner than hotels, were down with the Eurasians to 0.4 per cent in 1931. This damnable sex, by no means to be tamed by quinine or cricket. Guilt guilt guilt.

In an appendix Mr Butcher gives us the true story behind Somerset Maugham's "The Letter". Mrs Proudlock, who had emptied a revolver into the body of her lover, William Stewnrd, was sentenced to death by hanging. Outrage expressed in fiery petitions to the Crown gained her a free pardon. The reputation of all white women in the FMS was at issue. "We have an idea", said the *Malop Mail*, "that nowhere at Home are English women more honoured and esteemed that here." Yet it was the existence of Englishwomen in the tropical colonies that was responsible for the greatest measure of disunet among the men. They were compressees as well as godlesses. When white female flesh appeared on the cinema screens of Malaya, to be drooled at by hot-blooded Asians, the status of the governing British seemed threatened. A white woman tipsy in the club, discussing sexual needs unsatisfied by an overworked and debilitated husband, was a great topic of scandal in the bazaar. It was a man's world and a realistic planter or government officer should have been content with beery sociality and the odd session with a geisha or percumpum jalan. But these men had been to decent schools and were romantic. It was the same in Burma, as Orwell lamentably tells us. The French suffered less.

Whether the French were better colonists than the British is an academic question, but at least such Frenchmen as were planting in Malaya (Pierre Boulle, for instance, and Henri Fauconnier) were kept sane by their own culture and some of them (those two, anyway) produced memorable novels based on their Malayan experiences. The British were mostly philistines, and they have left behind a heritage of philistinism. *Komping* culture is dying, and a metropolitan culture of art galleries and orchestras seems unlikely to arise. What there is, and flourishing too, is a materialist consumerism which is threatened from the north by the communists and from the west by the militant Islam of the ayatollahs. Mr Butcher's book deals with a race of people who may well be surveyed in terms of anthropological generalities. There was no room for the brilliant or the eccentric. British Malaya was creamed by enlargement and suffering mediocrities. The building of Singapore in 1819 was a rather different affair.

An absolutist's apologia

By Alun Chalfont

MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI:
The Shah's Story
Translated by Teresa Waugh
240pp. Michael Joseph. £8.50.
0 7181 1944 4

In May he some time before an authoritative biography of the Shah of Iran appears. The archives, if they have not already been destroyed by the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, remain in Tehran, which is nowadays not exactly a local point of objective research. It is possible, of course, that some alleged "experts on Iranian affairs" will be allowed to complete the hatchet job upon which several dubious reputations have already been built; it may be, too, that fulsome eulogies will appear, based on the somewhat subjective accounts of those supporters of the Shah who escaped the barbaric retribution of the mob and are now living more or less discreetly in New York, Paris and London. But the truth about the rise and fall of the Pahlavi dynasty will have to await the return of the rudiments of civilized human behaviour to Iran.

Meanwhile a posthumous autobiography has now appeared. It is fairly safe to predict that it will infuriate the Shah's enemies and disappoint his friends. It was clearly written in a hurry and, although the translation from the Shah's French is, for the most part, admirable, the style remains somewhat pedestrian. As to the substance, there are no great surprises, one or two profound insights and a few passages of the Shah's distinctive brand of religious mysticism.

The early chapters of *The Shah's Story* retell the now familiar story of the Shah's father Reza Khan, the Cossack soldier who founded the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. Many of the Shah's political attitudes and prejudices can be traced to the circumstances of his father's abdication after British and Russian troops occupied Iran in 1941 to neutralize German influence there. Foreign occupation and his father's abrupt banishment to exile left an indelible mark on the Shah, which may well have been responsible for the marked ambivalence of his foreign policy. Although he had an implacable hostility towards communism, he was never able completely to overcome his mistrust of Western motives. The baleful influence of the British is a recurrent theme in his autobiography.

In 1952, the hairbrain HMS Mauritius was ordered in Abadan when Mossadeq, then Prime Minister of Iran, nationalized the oil companies. The Shah told the British Ambassador that if Britain attacked Iran again "I will personally lead my soldiers against you". The story of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company is told with an intensity of controlled bitterness. The Shah was outraged that although Anglo-Iranian's initial investments of 100 million dollars had been completely recovered by the beginning of the 1920s, and its income subsequently rose to something like 2,000 million dollars, "Iran was getting nothing . . .". By 1950, according to this account, Iran had received 45 million dollars in royalties, while the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company had paid to the British Government 212 million dollars in income tax alone. The final blow was that a large proportion of the company's profits were invested in oil exploration in other countries "so that humiliation was added to injustice".

The BBC earned the Shah's special contempt. He was convinced that the Persian language section of the Overseas Service had fallen into the hands of Iranian dissidents, and that from the beginning of 1978 their Farsi broadcasts were a carefully orchestrated series of attacks on his regime. He was angered by the BBC's habit of broadcasting at length the Ayatollah Khomeini's inflammatory speeches from his boleholo in Paris. His worst fears of British duplicity seemed to him to be confirmed at the time of his own downfall, when he was convinced that he was being consistently deceived by the British ambassador. It is significant, too, that Britain and British politicians are pointedly absent from the list of those to whom the Shah expresses gratitude for help, sympathy and support during his last days in exile. President Sadat, the King of Morocco, Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon, the President of Mexico, German and French tourists are all mentioned with varying degrees of admiration and affection.

Although he preserves a discreet silence about the matter in his book, the Shah made no secret in private of his disgust at his treatment by the British Government, which at first led him to believe that he would be allowed to live in the house that he had bought in the south of England, but subsequently conveyed to him a message to the effect that his presence would cause "insuperable problems of security" and that he would therefore not be welcome.

The United States does not stand much higher in the Shah's regard. He accuses the Americans, like the British, of urging him, against his own judgment, to accelerate the process of liberalization in the autumn and winter of 1978-79. Yet unofficial American visitors were advocating firmness against the demands of his people. The confusion came to a head in January 1979 with the mysterious visit of the American General Huyser, Deputy to the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, who warned the Iranian armed forces against any attempt to save the Shah by means of a military coup. This disreputable incident was summed up by General Robb, commander in Chief of the Iranian Air Force. Before being "executed" by the new regime, the General told the tribunal which conducted his travesty of a trial that "General Huyser threw the King out of the country like a dead mouse". It is not surprising that President Carter does not even qualify for a single reference in the Shah's autobiography.

Much of the story is taken up with an account of the achievements by which the Shah believes that he should be judged as a ruler—the land reforms, the industrialization of a backward economy, the emancipation of women, the attack on illiteracy, and, most significantly, the development of the Iranian armed forces, which formed an integral part of the West's global security system. The Shah points out that, under his programme, the strength of the Iranian armed forces would have been three-quarters of a million by 1982. With their main battle tanks, modern artillery units, helicopters, airborne early warning radar, submarines and cruisers they would have consolidated their position as the most powerful military establishment in the area. But within less than two years of the Shah's overthrow they have degenerated into an ill-equipped, inadequately led and ineffective rump of an army, unable to secure their own frontiers against attack, much less to maintain the balance of power in one of the vital strategic areas of the world.

Those in the West who persistently vilified the Shah and acted as public relations officers for his enemies must now be contemplating the results of their efforts with some satisfaction. Iran itself is in a state of political and economic chaos under a regime which has become notorious for its macabre mixture of incompetence and barbarity. The stability of the entire Middle East area is at risk and the only beneficiary is the Soviet Union.

It is possible to predict with some confidence that future historians will judge the Shah less harshly than they will many of his contemporaries. It is true, and there are passages in his book which tacitly concede the point, that excesses were committed in his name and under his authority, and as an absolute ruler he cannot escape the ultimate responsibility. Yet it is arguable that the Shah's regime was never as cruelly oppressive as his enemies claimed. Certainly his achievements have never been adequately acknowledged, even by those who professed to be his friends. His memoirs, uneven and ingenuous though they may be, reveal something of the remote, vulnerable and strangely myopic man behind the public image of the arrogant, insensitive autocrat. Commenting on the rule of the mullahs in Iran he writes: "The question one asks is how long it will take the misguided Iranian people to realize that they have been made the plaything of a mirage, and that they are now in the midst of Dasht-e-Kavir, one great desert." It is a question that may be answered sooner than the Shah could have dreamed.

Rake's rhetoric

By J. P. Kenyon

JEREMY TREGLOWN [Editor]:
The Letters of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester
275pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £21.
0 631 12831 X

Rochester burnt himself out at the age of thirty-three, leaving behind him a collection of lyrics which by dint of their sheer beauty and emotional force have established themselves as among the best in the language. A poet as good as this inevitably attracts imitators; he himself was too drunk or too ill most of the time to get his poems properly published; so his poetic canon is lost in a cloud of speculation and academic sweat.

Similarly his letters. John Hayward printed many, perhaps too many, in the *Collected Works* in 1926; Hayward was a sensitive but at the same time an optimistic editor. Some of his indulgences were corrected by Johannes Prinz in a sturdy German way, but his *Life and Writings* (Leipzig, 1927) came too hard on Hayward's heels. John Harold Wilson published an impeccable edition of Rochester's letters to and from Henry Savile—but in Columbus, Ohio, in the middle of the Second World War.

David Vieth of Iowa brought out an edition of the poems for Yale in 1968 which seems definitive—at least, it has stood up to the usual predatory sniping so far. Jeremy Treglown has now done the same for the letters, or all of them that have so far come to light—with a name like Rochester the discovery of others can never be ruled out. For good measure he has also included letters to Rochester; the whole still makes quite a modest book. I believe that all of them have been printed before, but in a scattered way.

I do not agree with all Treglown's editorial decisions, but I would admit that all are allowable and none of them are worth arguing about. He shows an admirable commonsense in his distribution among the rest of the large number of undated fragments which Rochester wrote, and the immeasurable sanctity of his material has enabled him to annotate what he has with exemplary thoroughness. Indeed, sometimes he is guilty of a transatlantic overkill—I do not think the potential reader of a book like this, for instance, needs to be told what the Pool of Bethesda was, or that "chirurgical" means "surgical". But his introduction is brief until to the point, and he still manages to say something that is interesting about this much-discussed poet. However I would have welcomed a discussion of previous editions and an indication of how this one is an improvement on them; here what is probably tact is made to seem evasiveness. I would also have liked some account of Harleian MS 7033, the main repository of Rochester's holograph letters.

So much for fact. Any further comment must be a matter of taste. It ought to be said that these letters are very far from being great prose, in the sense that some of Rochester's verse is great poetry. This is not for want of trying—that is largely the trouble; in fact, all his earlier letters are insufferably mannered. Even when he is trying to convey emotion or passion, it comes out like a writing-master's exercise, thus:

> I kiss my dear wife a thousand times, as far as imagination and wish can fly; I will give me leave. Think upon me as long as it is pleasant and convenient to you to do so, and afterwards forget me, for though I would fain make you the author and foundation of my happiness yet I would not be the cause of your constraint or disturbance, for I love not myself so much as I do you, neither do I value my own satisfaction equally as I do yours. Certainly this is agreeable stuff, smooth and elegant, but after a few pages it cloys the palate. His correspondents were precious enough, but when a letter suddenly intrudes from Buckingham, Buckhurst or Henry Savile it is as if someone has opened a window in a stifling room. For one thing, these other people have a few facts to relate, be they only gossip; one of the boring things about Rochester's letters is their fatuousness, combined with the conventionality of their sentiments—which is why so many of them are difficult to date. Others are so obscure that Treglown has to provide a full translation in the footnotes.

Sometimes a letter from Henry Savile could "raise" him, but even then after a few choice phrases he relapses into a kind of roguish self-pity. Self-pity, in fact, is the keynote in much of his correspondence. He tells Savile briskly, "Of the three businesses of this age, women, politics and drinking, the last is the only exercise at which you and I have not proved ourselves arrant fumblers". Then he goes on:

> otherwise, when we meet next let us appear to friends of both sexes, and as they shall determine live and die sheer drunkards or entire lovers; for as we mingle the matter, it is hard to say which is the more tiresome creature, the loving drunkard or the drunken lover.

I am inclined to think that his was a severe case of arrested development, in letter writing as in other things. His passionate affair with the actress Elizabeth Barry seemed to pull him together, and he was capable of writing her a manly or less straightforward love letter:

> The little joy I take in everything wherein you are not concerned, the pleasing perplexity of endless thought which I fall into wherever I ponder upon you, are brought in my remembrance, and lastly, the continual disquiet I am in during your absence convince me sufficiently that do you justice in loving you as a woman was never h[illegible] before.

A phrase like this shows perplexity of endless thought; even has some of the literary dexterity of his poetry.

When he fell ill in the autumn of 1677 his letters to Savile display much more assured masculinity; actually enough we must attribute to his decline him early death. (Savan sung to his wife (so far as we are concerned) is this magnificent apologia:

> Tis not so easy thing to be entirely happy, but to be kind is very easy, and that is the greatest measure of happiness. I speak this to put you in mind of being kind to me; you have practised that so long that I have a joyful confidence you will never forget it; but to show that I expect to have a sense of what the method of my life seems so utterly incurable, I must not be wise about my own folly, or say this letter had been a book dedicated to you and published to all the world.

Punch weekly dinners will appreciate it.

Still undecided between an [illegible] which his talent was considerable, and writing which promised quicker returns, Thackeray does at this moment to fall in love with Isabella Shawe, a penniless girl with a tyrannical mother. It seems that tragedy entered Thackeray's life. Beating down Mrs Shawe's opposition, he married Isabella and started on a precarious existence of writing and drawing wherever he could find a market. After the birth of their third child Isabella's mind gave way, and though she emerged from the suicidal state which caused her to throw herself into the sea from an Irish cross-channel boat, she lived to old age without recovery.

It was from these experiences that Thackeray's novels spread. To give only one example, there are traces of Isabella in the early [illegible]

For richer, for poorer

By Violet Powell

ANN MONSARRAT:
An Uneasy Victorian
Thackeray the Man, 1811-1863
461pp. Cassell. £9.95.
0 304 30556 1

William Makepeace Thackeray's life was a drama in which shocking tragedy and financial disaster were not infrequently followed by comedy and even by knockabout farce. Fortunately Ann Monsarrat has a firm grasp of what might be called the novelist's own story line, for it was already complex by the time of his birth. Both his parents belonged to families who had hoped to make their fortunes in India. Only too frequently sudden death had cut short the careers of these forbears, and the survivors found that the fruit of the pagoda tree was not to be fairy gold.

Thackeray's mother, reunited to have had some Indian blood, had been sent out to Calcutta to mend her broken fortunes. She had been told by her grandmother that her impecunious father, Henry Carmichael-Smyth had died from a sudden fever. Believing this story, Anne Becher married Richmond Thackeray in 1810 their son, William, was born in 1811, the family group being painted by George Chinnery when William was apparently two years old.

By this time the peace of Richmond Thackeray had been permanently wrecked. Meeting an agreeable young officer, newly arrived in India without any acquaintance, he had asked the young man to dine at his house. Anne Thackeray was overwhelmed to discover that this was her former admirer Henry Carmichael-Smyth. He had his letters in her returned unopened. On hearing the news, Richmond Thackeray made little comment but, not unreasonably, felt disillusioned. He faded from a lingering fever. His widow married Henry Carmichael-Smyth, who was to become the model for Colonel Newcome, that epitome of every virtue except common sense.

Like Kipling fifty years later, William grew up in India as a spoilt little prince, only to have the shattering experience of being sent home to undergo a particularly sordid schooling. His relations in England were kind, but at Charterhouse he was physically ill-treated, neglected educationally and initiated into the coarsest language and habits. Ann Monsarrat treats this part of Thackeray's story with understandable sympathy, but having labelled him a Victorian she is apt to write as if hypocrisy, humbug and an Evangelical conviction of the constant threat of hell-fire were solely faults of the Victorian age. She ignores the fact that when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 Thackeray was already a married man and a father, while his mother's fundamentalist religious beliefs had been acquired at a period often considered to have been particularly dissolute.

Thackeray's father had left what would appear to have been an adequate fortune for the support of his widow, his son and his half-Indian daughter. The son set himself up in style at Cambridge and was systematically plucked by professional gamblers. Two even found it worth their while to lodge opposite Trinity College. Still under age but six feet three in height, Thackeray arranged a continental tour of study, settling for some time at Weimar. Here he was granted an audience with the aged author of *The Sufferings of Werther*, which was to give Thackeray the theme for his best remembered poem. More frivolously he persuaded his parents to send him the uniform of a corporal of yeomanry to wear at the Grand Ducal palace, an humiliary outfit ornamented with pink rosettes and touches of sky blue.

On reaching his majority it was discovered that, between the incompetence and crookedness of trustees and the collapse of Indian banks, the bulk of his fortune had disappeared. However, after an abortive beginning in the law and an unsuccessful attempt to buy a newspaper, Thackeray crossed to Paris, determined to believe as a Parisian. He gambled and pursued women, emptying his purse and acquiring an infection which left him a martyr to a painful stricture. Ann Monsarrat is charitable in her view of Thackeray's misfortunes, including the results of his own excesses, but it is hard not to feel that his later habit of describing the treatment of his infirmity at the *Punch* weekly dinners will appreciate it.

Still undecided between an [illegible] which his talent was considerable, and writing which promised quicker returns, Thackeray does at this moment to fall in love with Isabella Shawe, a penniless girl with a tyrannical mother. It seems that tragedy entered Thackeray's life. Beating down Mrs Shawe's opposition, he married Isabella and started on a precarious existence of writing and drawing wherever he could find a market. After the birth of their third child Isabella's mind gave way, and though she emerged from the suicidal state which caused her to throw herself into the sea from an Irish cross-channel boat, she lived to old age without recovery.

It was from these experiences that Thackeray's novels spread. To give only one example, there are traces of Isabella in the early [illegible]

A lesson in restlessness

By John Barnard

PAT ROGERS:
Robinson Crusoe
182pp. George Allen and Unwin. £10.
0 04 300102 7

Full of meat, Pat Rogers's addition to the Unwin Critical Library is marked by a hustling energy and an encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject. His account of *Robinson Crusoe* fulfils the series's demanding, indeed mutually contradictory, intentions: to provide a reliable and stimulating work of reference, embodying the present state of knowledge and opinion in accessible form", while being "an essential secondary text to be consulted in some scholarly investigations". The book gives undergraduates (and their teachers) a compact guide to the background and to the main lines of critical thought about *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, it is efficient enough to raise fears that an intelligent reading of Pat Rogers's summary and analysis of the work of Ian Watt, John Richetti, M. E. Novak et al, might stifle any will to read the originals. But this is far from being a neutral survey: the author's own view of the novel is carefully but forcibly evident throughout. Rogers also supplies a full bibliography, maps of Crusoe's journeys, and helpful appendixes including Woodes Rogers's and Richard Steele's accounts of Selkirk, and a provisional list of the illustrators of *Crusoe* (a topic on which Rogers is currently working). All in all a substantial and useful tool.

Rogers admits that Ian Watt's remains the most powerful recent reading of *Crusoe*, but his own view qualifies Watt's as well as John Richetti's related but more psychological interpretations. With others, he notes that the plot resists their findings. "Many critics want to define Crusoe as the representative bourgeois hero; but his story is clearly that of an adventurer rejecting the bourgeois comforts held out to him by his father." With G. A. Starr he believes that the novel convincingly depicts Crusoe's inner struggle, and he gives a judicious account of M. E. Novak's work on Defoe's economic ideas, and of Peter Earle's attempt to modify Defoe's conservatism. Given Rogers's own scepticism a surprising amount of space is allowed to discussion of Douglas Brooks's numerological analysis. Throughout, the author's immense knowledge of eighteenth-century life and thought is constantly brought to bear on the novel and its critics. Particularly valuable and original is the use of publishing history to throw light on *Crusoe*'s readership and Defoe's position vis a vis Pope and Swift. It allows Rogers to dispose of some of the over-simple notions of the audience made current by Watt, but also offers a kind of analysis clearly relevant to other writers in this and other periods.

Some interesting points are also made, if too briefly, in an analysis of Defoe's style. The decision to give over the last chapter to *Crusoe*'s critical history leads to some repetitiousness, since the main issues have already been discussed. Over-eagerness to advance the case for Defoe leads to occasional loose statements—"Pui eloquently Crusoe, *Mrs Dalloway* seems to see an abstracted and distant rendition of feeling." It all depends what you mean by "feeling".

Rogers's preference is for a Defoe in "full imaginative possession of his material". But Arnold Kettle is surely right to insist on Defoe's as an art of negative capability. The material possesses the novelist. The plurality of readings so fairly set out by Rogers reflects something about the text: *Robinson Crusoe* encourages overlapping and contradictory interpretations precisely because there are contradictory impulses at the heart of the fiction and its culture. Rogers's list of translations, adaptations and Robinsonades convincingly demonstrates how *Robinson Crusoe* swiftly became part of popular mythology; how it is indeed a prophetic myth with all the plurality of signification characteristic of the most powerful myths. The novel's endless metamorphoses—amusing, nasty, others thus is a *Cheutsch-Technologischer Robinson* (1809), *The Catholic Crusoe* (1862), *Le Robinson Noir* (1877), and even a *Dog Crusoe* (1850) (among the stage versions Rogers misses the version performed by Jérôme Severy's Grand Magic Circus at the Roundhouse in the early 1970s)—indicate not just popularity but a radical appeal to the Western imagination.

In answer to Watts and Richetti, Rogers argues that "Crusoe's restless temperament [is] the very thing that makes him hugely untypical of middle-class morals and habits", yet it is, paradoxically, that very restlessness which has attracted readers, and which lies at the heart of capitalism and the Western work ethic. A Buddhist Crusoe would be self-contradictory. Yet Rogers is absolutely right to argue that the critic must resist the blandishments of mythological readings, which are, finally, reductive. The dangers are made clear by his rebuttal of Isaac Kramnick's view of Crusoe as an "unabashed modern"—"to see Crusoe as a pure success-story, happily overturning the values of his father's generation whilst Defoe garlands the fictional meanings and impair the whole moral lesson". Rogers's own book conveys the quality of Crusoe's world, and persistently returns the critical questions to the novel itself.

Attendant on the crises

By Barbara Levick

ROBIN SEAGER:
Pompey
A Political Biography
256pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.
0 631 10841 6

PETER GREENHALGH:
Pompey
The Roman Alexander
267pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £18.
0 297 77640 1

No better than Caesar; a martyr for freedom; able to tolerate no equal, nor Caesar a superior. Analysing these stock judgments on Pompey, Robin Seager finds the third the least objectionable, while Peter Greenhalgh, to judge by his title (this volume reaches only to Pompey's forty-eighth year), inclines to a different figure again, the conqueror who had triumphed over three continents and brought the east under Roman sway. The two writers demonstrate how diversa works on the same subject can be. Their attitude towards a minor topos, Pompey's attractiveness to women, makes the point. Greenhalgh exploits Plutarch's story of the courtesan who loved to boost that she never left Pompey's embrace without his teeth marks on her neck—Pompey did not confine his prowess to the battlefield. In 62 BC he offered his own bond and that of his son to nieces of Cato and was refused; Seager merely observes that the girls were eager for the match.

Other divergencies conform to the handling of this theme. Seager's political biography eschews verbiage and offers no estimate of Pompey as a commander. He is concise and austere, puts his footnotes where they should be in a work of scholarship, and makes no concessions to the general reader, spelling out the name of an unimportant victim of Sulla but not what Sulla's reforms meant. Greenhalgh repudiates Murray's apartheid, likes to offer explanations (even if superficial) of unclear ways and to translate ancient terms; indices were those useful chattels whose absence makes the tasks of most overlent economies and whose easy availability made it unnecessary for Roman engineers to bother inventing labour-saving devices; Rome's constitution was democratic; Pompey became head of state at thirty-five. The unnumbered notes are relegated to the end of the book.

The truth is that Greenhalgh has succumbed to Pompey's charm; and enthusiasm reveals itself in verbal excess. His pages team with battles and triumphs, funerals and orations; his own words are big (Pompey has "megalomania"), and once a grotesque coloring ("modiocracy"); his metaphors come from brothels, the cricket-field, the cardtable. The adventurous story carries the reader along with it swept and gusto, but inability to realist the dramatic is self-defeating; by making the tribune Livius Drusus "full dead", Greenhalgh deprives us of his inimitable last words, "Will Rome ever have another citizen like me?" Worse, it demeans his judgment, even when he has read modern critics. His mentor F. E. Adcock (to whose memory he dedicates the volume) pointed out that when Crassus left Rome against Pompey's return in 62 BC, it could not have been from fear: his route involved approaching Pompey. But Plutarch's version is too exciting to abandon.

Far different is Seager's view of his hero, whom he dispassionately cuts down to size. Not personality but the fabric of politics is what interests Seager and the result is in addition to a series of distinguished articles by him on the period, with appendixes on two notorious Caesarian chestnuts. By handling Pompey's campaigns so lightly (they are the best thing in Greenhalgh's book), Seager eliminates the basis of his power and fame. Yet it was in his successes in the east that Pompey's real achievement lay; not in fancied resemblance to Alexander's but because he promoted the development of the cities that were to underpin Roman rule until the fourth century AD and to be the centre of cultural life until the Turkish conquest.

Admiring Alexander

By P. A. Brunt

PHILIP A. STADTER:
Arrian of Nicomedia
256pp. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. $18.50.
0 8078 1364 8

While Greenhalgh offers biography of a familiar, colourful sort, inviting the strictures of Lucian on writers unable to forego the pleasing set-piece, Seager's plain diffidence in truth might satisfy the author of "How to Write History", but it does not make a biography.

To find Pompey's place in the late Republic and account for conflicting stock judgments (invoking ancient naivety is not enough) we must fore his part in its downfall. It is remarkable of the data agree in one vital respect: their estimate of Pompey's aims. He wanted, not to rule as king or dictator, but to be the man to whom senate and people turned, whenever there was a military or administrative crisis. But the senate would approach Pompey only with reluctance. So, to maintain his power and prestige, he was driven to provoke crises at home or abroad. Was driven? Greenhalgh has not given his final verdict; but Pompey was if anything too decent, and in the end it was his undoing. Accordingly, the two writers take a similar line over Pompey's first consulship, denying that it was extorted from the senate by threat of force. Majority opinion saw Pompey's consulship as necessary and proper; and he resumed a Sullan down to the end of the 70s. The view is a paradox. Pompey's consulship, held as a first magistracy years before the minimum age, was a gross infringement of the spirit of the Sullan constitution. Neither the senate as a whole nor individual senators without special ties with Pompey can have wished it. Pompey in 70 was in the happy position of an armed robber whose victim has fainted before he has bed to pull the trigger.

Pompey's political techniques must also be faced. Ambiguity was his stock-in-trade, political filtration, we Cicero discovered, a most accomplished art. A recurring theme in Greenhalgh's book is the fear Romans felt of Sulla's pupil, and Pompey's aim of removing that fear. But he exploited it, rather by playing on it (171 BC) or allaying it (62). Seager goes deeper into Pompey's mentality, devoting a chapter to his father Strabo. From him Pompey learnt the benefits to be gained from playing off one side against the other. Sometimes it took the form of raising up an enemy he was to put down—or join, as with Lepidus, Caesar, and perhaps Catiline. For Greenhalgh, the paradoxical significance of the Catiline affair to the story of Pompey is that he had nothing to do with it. Seager is nearer the mark; even if the conspiracy was largely a figment of Cicero's imagination (a fashionable view), discontents festered beneath the surface; and Pompey might at worst unite all the malcontents under his own leadership, at best exploit the need to crush unrest as a pretext for keeping his army together. If Greenhalgh were less keen to exonerate Pompey he might have avoided using him as a vehicle for gibes at the immillitary windbag, Cicero—who as consul saved the state from the necessity of being saved by Pompey.

But the ambiguity of Pompey was more than a technique learnt from his father. He was unbending, or yielding to, changes in the tension that had always existed between the ambitions of the individual Roman—monarchical head of his house—and the tight restrictions that society and the state imposed on that each individual might enjoy his due share of power and glory, and the integrity of the oligarchy be preserved against pressures from inside and below. The tension was clear in the career of Sulla and it was finally broken when Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Nobody knew, probably Pompey himself did not, if or when he would destroy those restraints, instead of having things both ways by ensuring that he was repeatedly released from them.

Arrian was a Greek of varied accomplishments. He sat under the Stoic Epictetus and recorded his sermons in the master's vigorous vernacular; unfashionable as this was, their force and earnestness, which makes one think of Richard Baxter, preaching "as a dying man to dying men", preserved four of the eight books. Arrian then rose in Roman service to command in Cappadocia under Hadrian. In the intervals of leisure or in later retirement he composed many other works, chiefly historical, in diction studiously limited from classical models. Though his histories of Alexander's successors, of Parthia and Rome's relations with that kingdom, and of Arrian's native Bithynia are known only from a few citations, his style, which appealed to Byzantine taste, ensured the survival of his *Anabasis of Alexander*, of an appendix (*Indica*) on Nearchus' voyage from the Indus to the Persian Gulf, and of some minor tracts, when so many far more original works were lost. His clarity and simple elegance has indeed a certain charm, and the same qualities are found in Philip A. Stadter's comprehensive review of his life and writings.

However, despite Professor Stadter's extensive knowledge of earlier scholarly work and many shrewd observations, the book is more of an apology for Arrian than a critical assessment. Stadter thinks that Arrian's work was marked by more unity of outlook, more relevance to his own age, and more independence than others will readily concede.

Thus he thinks that Epictetus' teaching permanently influenced Arrian. But for Epictetus virtue alone was sufficient and necessary for the good life, and anything external to the moral will, and dependent on factors outside a man's own control, such as power and glory, mattered nothing to his happiness or worth. Yet Arrian was so deeply impressed by the magnitude of Alexander's achievements that he excused such faults in his hero as he recognized, even his avidity for glory; indeed he himself hoped for lasting fame for his commemoration of Alexander's deeds. The moral judgments he sometimes passes in the *Anabasis* are not superficially Stoic, and his admiration for Alexander is quite foreign to Epictetus' outlook.

Again, most of Arrian's themes reflect the antiquarianism and nostalgia for the past that was typical of what some era planned to call the Greek renaissance of his age. Stadter does not convince me that he made them in general relevant to current practical concerns. Alexander's conquests transformed the world and greatly influenced the conditions in which Arrian lived. But he shows no appreciation of this, choosing to describe an epic adventure much as contemporaries doubtless did. The greater part of his Tactics similarly describe bygone methods of fighting.

Here he was demonstrably paraphrasing an earlier writer. I believe that he did much the same in his *Anabasis* and *Indica*, as I shall argue in the second volume of my edition. He even copies out-of-date geographical information from his authorities. Judgments which purport to be his own are at least in some cases taken over from them. This is probably true of his whole interpretation. He deserves credit for relying on the least untrustworthy contemporary accounts: that is why, *fonte de mieux*, he is our best source, though he is capable of inaccuracies and serious omissions. But he lacked the acumen to criticize them, and made little effort, unlike a later Bithynian, Cassius Dio, to penetrate the causes and significance of events. Stadter would clearly dissent from this estimate, but a much more thorough examination of Arrian's relation to his sources than he provides is required to justify his own assessment of Arrian's independence, while Arrian's interpretation of Alexander, whether or not it be his own, must be evaluated against our own understanding of his acts, a task Stadter does not attempt. His book will probably be of most use for the study of Arrian's minor works.

Mineral magnetism

By David Ridgway

MICHAEL GRANT:
The Etruscans
317pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £17.50.
0 297 77748 3

Another book about the Etruscans is an enticing prospect for the common reader. For publishers, on the other hand, only royalty and child-bearing seem to exercise the same fascination as the area bounded by the Tiber and the Arno between the eighth and the fifth centuries BC. As a result, every public library in Britain probably possesses at least five of the twenty and more general accounts of the Etruscans that have been written in (or translated into) English during the past two decades: Bloch, Hampton, Barrel-Courtès, Heurgon, Hus, Mansuelli, Richardson, Scullard, Strom, von Vacano (1960-69); Bonti Bonteni and others, Cristofani, Keller, Macnamara, Massa, Ogilvie, Pallottino, Time-Life and Wellard (1970-79)—a list that is certainly incomplete, and in any case does not include specialized books on single aspects (architecture, art, bucchero and landscape in 1978-79, for example: Boethius *redivivus*, Brendel, Rosmussen and Potter).

In the circumstances, there is no point in denying that if approached Michael Grant's *Etruscans* in the grim conviction that saturation point had been reached and passed—and that a series called "History of Civilisation" would here done better to rummission a volume on Greek South Italy and Sicily (of which there has been only one brief announcing treatment since the late T. J. Dunbabin's *Western Greeks* in 1948). In the event, my overriding impression is that of a picture blocked out in primary colours, and not quite complete. The chapter titles of Part One, which sets the scene, are indicative: Etrurin's Metals (Chapter One) were responsible for the Creation of the Etruscan Cities (Chapter Two) because they attracted Decisive Influences from the East (Chapter Three). However, the "Origin" of the Etruscans (Chapter Four) is not to be seen as a mass immigration but rather as the product of a "swirl of roaming and trekking people" (page 84); subsequent Expansion to the South (Chapter Five) and especially to the North (Chapter Six) was once more connected primarily with metals.

This is all very well as far as it goes—indeed, some excellent points are well made; but it does not go far enough. The intention and the effect of Part Two are both highly constructive: the abolition, wherever possible, of the word "Etruscan" and its substitution by the name of one of the individual states. Accordingly, after a glance at Dicunity (Chapter Seven), Chapters Eight to Fourteen consider the major Etruscan city-states and their territories as separate units: Tarquinii, Caere, Vulci, Vetulonia, Volsterrae, Clusium and Veii. I do not understand why Volsinii does not appear either in this list or on the map on page 116, which shows Clusine territory bordering that of the other six—a most surprising state of affairs.

In the first place, the Iron Age possessors of the material culture (or cultural material) conventionally known as "Villanovan" ought at least to have been mentioned. A great deal is known about them, their economy and their society; and it was they, in their thousands, who received and treated with the Phoenician and Greek bearers of gifts and technology from the east. Secondly, mineral wealth—on however colossal a scale—is attractive only if the miners can be fed: the other natural resources of Etruria were vital in this respect from an early stage, and later on in their own commercial right—a factor that is not really admitted until Chapters Thirteen (Clusium, Arretium and Cortona) and Fourteen (Veii). For instance, the cargo of Etrusco-Corinthian amphoras found in the sixth-century wreck off Antibes points to an export trade in Etruscan wine—as, in its way, does the story of Arruns of Clusium.

The funerary arrangements of the ninety different families attested epigraphically in the Crocifisso del Tufo cemetery at Orvieto (Volsinii) may or may not be "far removed from the splendours to be seen elsewhere in Etruria" between 550 and 500: but their real importance, as M. Pallottino saw in 1953, resides in the evidence they furnish for the existence of a prosperous middle class engaged in trade as distinct from industry. This is precisely the category that was forced by the decline in Etruscan, particularly Caeretan, sea-power after 535 (the so-called "Battle of Alalia") to look in the only direction left: northwards, but for markets rather than for metal. These cosmopolitan businessmen were the backbone of the Etruscan city-states, and their devotions were responsible for the prosperity of the great Etruscan sanctuaries. Their circumstances, incidentally, are strikingly reminiscent of those obtaining at Eubocnan Pithekoussai (Ischia) in the second half of the eighth century: a consideration that could have been taken as a cue for discussion of the actual processes involved in the westerly transmission of the Greek *polis*-concept to Etruria and to nowhere else outside Magna Graecia.

Happily, such omissions are more than outweighed by the resounding good sense of Professor Grant's remarks on what his printer calls "the ancient library sources" (page 63) for Etruscan origins. No one since E. J. Bickerman in 1952 has stated so pithily that "there was a whole industry devoted to finding origins for non-Greek peoples" and that this myth-making "showed no interest in what had actually happened, or in archaeological evidence; it was simply part of a learned, traditional, literary form of entertainment", with no holds barred in the matter of bogus etymology. Here at least is the background against which the all too familiar conflict between the alleged views of Herodotus (migration from Lydia) and of Dionysius of Hellicarnassus (the indigenous hypothesis) must be seen—and compared, as here it is not, with the non-literate evidence of the Villanovan and earlier cemeteries for population continuity or the conceivably operative moments.

In the second part of the book, Grant's lively histories of the Tarquinions, Cuceriens, Vulcentes and their neighbours survive an inevitable amount of repetition to a degree that makes one wonder why their author still hankers after traditional Etruscan mystery in his Introduction. I suspect, indeed, that even new readers will come away with a wholly accurate impression of Etruscans who are mysterious only if they are perceived externally as an amorphous whole through incomprehending Greek and Roman eyes—or by modern museum curators, who are bound to assist their ultimately clandestine suppliers in concealing the precise sources of exhibits. From the inside, the people, places and products assume a much clearer identity. If there were such an amalgam as the "Etruscan nation", it emerges as no more mysterious than that of the Celts or of any other proto-historic people. Where, after all, would we make of the Greeks if we had to do Greek history, drama or philosophy to tell us who they thought they were and what they thought they were doing?

Experts, also, will delight in detecting slips and factual errors throughout; this is not a work of exact scholarship, any more than "Etruscology" (a word new Grant rightly abhors) is an exact science. Much more significantly, the reader will find an extensive and almost incredibly up-to-date guide to the jungle of Etruscan bibliography on pages 258-306; and the precisely crisp and deftly organized narrative will give him every encouragement to use it.

This fundamentally entertaining book will do no harm to the Etruscans. On the contrary, it will almost certainly do them good. On past experience, I doubt very much if it will be possible to make either of these statements about more than three or four of the other ten or so Etruscan books "intended for the specialist and non-specialist alike" that I confidently expect to appear between now and 1989. We still need an account of the new ground that has been broken in Magna Graecia since 1948: it is the essential pre-requisite to an examination of the relationship ("for the history of Italy and the world, perhaps of more moment"—Dunbabin) between that area and Professor Grant's.

The dyspeptic tourist

By Tom Disch

ALAN ROSS :
Death Valley and Other Poems in America
92pp. London Magazine Editions. £3.
0 904388 36 0

Foreign travel can be a great instigation to poetry. People who have not produced a lyrical utterance since adolescence will suddenly wax poetic in their postcards home, while those, like the Childe Harolds, who have the habit of writing verse are liable to produce whole canons between one hotel room and the next. So long as the poet-traveller keeps moving among unfamiliar sites, the nomeless muse of diaries will probably continue to afflict him. Alan Ross, after no less than five Atlantic crossings, has assembled his travel poems into six many sections in his new collection, *Death Valley and Other Poems in America*.

Britons travelling in America (like Americans in Britain) are deprived of one of the elements of that strangeness so conducive to inspiration: they share the same language, more or less. Thus, having recovered from jet-lag, one's first disorientation cannot so readily ripen into that hermetic solitude in which the first whispers of Diaria (to give her a name) may be heard. Instead of an exotic Babel of *bonhomie* and other foreign types, there is an all-too-comprehensible yammering, which remains, nevertheless, obstinately out-of-reach, unclassifiable, and so—Ross repeatedly insists—unreal:

Lights drawed now, the cabin
Is scissored by silk legs of stewardesses,
Expressionless robots ministering
With brisk efficiency of night nurses—
They suggest lifestyles
Never quite lived,

Broken promises, failures of imagination.
("New York—Stapleton")

In Johannesburg, California, where there are "... Tin shacks/Off wide streets leading to nowhere", it happens again that "... imagination,/ Like the gold, ran out here. ..". In Palm Springs the palm trees resemble "bent tin in a toy oasis"; across the border in Mexico the names of towns are signposts to nothingness" and children are "claimants on the road to nowhere". In Chicago "... shoppers, shapeless in furs,/Waddle on unspecified outings", and in New York "... everything is alien,/ Hilge-water and refuse". Alas for Ross, these are not isolated instances of *tristesse* but the prevailing weather of his soul.

Why then, one cannot help but wonder, did he return four times? When not aghast at the great void, he is complaining about the amenities and folkways. His sheets are not clean, California women drive their Cadillacs with their eyes closed, and the movie stars' homes are off-limits, guarded by attack-dogs. It is a lousy old continent, too: only once, in a bar on Wall Street, does he strike up an actual conversation with the indigenes, whereupon a flicker of fellow feeling illuminates the zombies of America. One comes to suspect that his only reason for revisiting Death Valley and Environs was to write a sufficient number of poems to fill a book.

And why not? Dyspepsia and funk have their bards, too. Ross's poetry, however, does not improve in proportion to his longueurs; it merely replicates their flatness and lack of affect. Relentless as a rented car cruising at the new 55 mph speed limit, he records the signs along the highway and the information supplied by guidebooks and brochures:

Up Manitou Incline trucks in low gear
Grind and grunt. Mining villages
Are heaps of ash cruised by glasses.
At Central City, that "richest square mile
On earth", its sidewalks paved silver.
Bernhardt and Booth strode the boards
Of the Opera. We squeeze through Squaw Pass
For slit views of the Divide, peaks
Of the Sangre de Cristo treemlions
On Echo Lake. Ice cracks like pistol shots.

From Helen Hunt Falls, along U.S. 119,
Streams rein mass like pendants
In relief . . .
("Early Country")

And so it hums along. Lines break and stanzas splinter without rhyme or reason, merely as a sense of decorum (page-design dictates. His higher lyric flights are reserved for landscape painting, as when "In this late afternoon light Flamingoes improbably slip lakes dyed pink". But most of these snapshots look so much like the postcards one might buy at the souvenir stand, one wonders why he bothered to bring a camera.

The book's least forgivable defects, however, are neither its monotonous tone of kvetching self-pity nor yet its travel-diary amorphousness, but its persistent imprecision of observation and rhetoric and its narrow range of metaphorical reference. I doubt that those robust stewardesses wore *silk* stockings, and silk is again, and just as doubtfully, ascribed to the legs of women at a Mexican racetrack. Ross frowns at couples necking in "dime-store entrances" on Times Square (elsewhere in America there are dime-stores, yes, but not in the middle of its biggest honky-tonk), and he decorates a Florida river with "crocodiles and discarded contraceptives". He thinks that the lagged lunch of a "Hungarian parkkeeper" resembles "a parcel of underwear". (NB, American workmen do not send out their laundry.) Sometimes the imprecision exhibits with inflated rhetoric to produce passages worthy of *The Stuffed Owl*:

I lie not the night, Manhattan
Advancing out of the dark
Like a liner, glassed-in
And spectral, as if covered
In icing. . . .
("Central Heating, Manhattan")

As in metaphor, Ross evidences lame compass points: marital tears become tanks, and clouds are barrage balloons; spurting ("White patches of cattle grouped / Like cricketers . . .") ; nautical (Manhattan as an iced liner); and, the most preponderant, culinary. Scenery, in particular, evokes a gustatory response, and Ross's palette for landscape painting resembles nothing so much as the menu at Baskin-Robbins. Statistically, chocolate and pistachio appear to be the author's favourite flavours, but he also indulges in vanilla, honey and marzipan. American ice cream is indisputably richer than England's, but there are directer ways of saying so.

Lest it seem that I am missing the inner truth of so much faithfully recorded fatigue (the *Valley* is, after all, a Poetry Society Choice), it should be made clear that a kind of narrative emerges into view, with an unnamed "you" accompanying their blame for the author's ill-temper. In the final poem "you" appears in close-up:

The real you in my arms
Behind the photograph of a writer
With that schoolgirl intensity. . . .
("The Last of America")

In the last lines of this poem I learn that "you" has left. Ross's poetic paths comes too late, with retrospectively, to redeem so mediocre observation and slipshod prosody. It is a pity, but no excuse, that Ross can see nothing in the great Rorschach test of American lifestyles and evidences of

. . . lifestyles
Never quite lived,
Broken promises, failures of imagination.

Kinds of Irishry

By Carol Rumens

GEORGE BUCHANAN :
Possible Being
63pp. Carcanet. £2.95.
0 85635 312 4

EAVAN BOLAND :
In Her Own Image
38pp. Dublin: Arlen House. £10.
0 905223 17 9
(paperback, £2.70.)

WILL CULBERTSON, ROBERT JOHNSTONE and DAVID PARK :
Trio Poetry
65pp. Belfast: Blackstaff. £2.95.
0 85640 161 1

The five poets under consideration here illustrate the diversity of current Irish writing: not even the three young Northerners of the Blackstaff Trio can be said to constitute, or belong to, a "school". Eavan Boland is working, to the detriment of her talent, in the Anglo-American feminist tradition. And George Buchanan, the veteran of this bunch, is, as ever, an individualist.

Unfortunately, in his new collection Buchanan moves in an murky twilight-zone of form that has the appearance of good prose sur-et-gent poetry. The "poetic fictions" that dominate the book are narrated in the present tense, and in a tone sometimes reminiscent of a social worker writing up a case history: "A group is forming through the bond of liking/a sort of secret politics. Amicability may turn out to be/In this respect conspiratorial." The inner questionings of the assorted characters are as uninviting as their actions: "Will life mend changes or hors?/He trembles at the thought. Would she/feel free or shackled,/already tied while still so young?" The question arises as to whether those poems would not be more successful as short stories. Inevitably, the use of poetic form arouses expectations of poetic intensity. It is worth remembering that one of the most splendid, though flawed, of all so-called verse-novels is George Meredith's *Modern Love*, which remains very much a sequence of highly effective *poems*. *Possible Being* seems to me, with the exception of "Limavady Verses 1946", a disappointing waste of an able writer's resources.

"And there is a charge, a very large charge. For a word or a touch/Or a bit of blood". Wounded Lady Lazarus, alias Sylvia Plath. Perhaps she was more prophetic than she knew. Eavan Boland has obviously steeped herself unmelodiously in these holy relics and pays a heavy price as a result. "Trade for the Mimic Muse" (beginning "I've caught you out. You slut. You fat tom.—Sit here you are fanned in candlestick"), is pure "Lesbos" in tones, with images from "Nick and the Candlestick" and other Plath clusters. Female miseries accumulate—mastectomy, wife-battering and *anorexia nervosa*, as well as menstruation and the Cosmetic Con—but it all adds up in a pretty familiar statement. There are flashes (notably in "Aspects" and "In his own Image") of a sensibility that produced the title-poem of her last collection, "The War Horse", but overall the strong-willed, sensuous control of language has slipped into mere tendency. The line-drawings by Constance Short add a quite unnecessary physical emphasis to the sequence.

river the border, Blackstaff Trio has issued the first of a series of three-poet anthologies intended, as the press-release, to "provide a much-needed outlet for poets who are not yet ready for a full collection but whose work merits publication in permanent form". Robert Johnstone has a confident and assured skill, though he is still, one suspects, borrowing voices for some of his effects. "In Time of Peace", for instance, seems to be modelled on Pasternak's "The Hyperbrees". But he has his own verbal music, grace, "Bounce" being a sound example, "Down crackly phones he says/he knows that words like 'home'/depend on where the heart is". Johnstone is a stimulating and serious poet with admirable descriptive powers (see "Working on Cooliflowers"), who seems most at home with personal subjects.

David Park, born in 1953, is the youngest of the trio. He hasn't yet the knack of cutting a clean path through the foliage of language—adjectives are piled high and metaphors frequently fail to illuminate: "And though scepics so place/Our hand in the side of risen fear/Feel the nail prints of our credulity/In the end they are unmistakable clear". Yet Park succeeds in making enough clear for us to feel that inside the lumpiness of his particular poem ("The Year that Frighten") and others, there exists a keenly felt experience and a mind willing to probe it patiently.

Will Culbertson seems self-conscious and hesitant about whether he should be writing at all. "This quest for art's lost an ego trip" he confesses, apparently without irony. There are poems about childhood, but the writer lacks the skill and intensity that made the younger Heaney's approaches in a similar area so effective. Culbertson seems happiest when making rather lightweight but touching jokes at his own expense, as in "Brotherly Love": "Then David (I would be lion) conglomerate his sweet/And is stickily rolled, shattering content/ Bigger responsibility I lick each/ every time./I dumped him hard, then quickly gave him mine."

John Gardner, A Bibliographical Profile (172pp. Southern Illinois University Press $12.95. 0 8093 0935 3) has been compiled by Gardner's official biographer, John M. Howell, and includes cartoons, radio plays and libretti as well as the more familiar poetry, novels and criticism. In an "Afterword" Gardner himself writes "I have no idea what use a book like John Howell's is to the general public anyway—or rather, alas, to the scholarly and book-collecting public" and concludes by addressing the "young and aspiring" reader: "Be a farmer or an engineer, don't write; or if you must write, be like Salinger: Hide out! Mum's the word!"

Achievements of language

By Norman Malcolm

G. P. BAKER and P. M. S. HACKER :
Wittgenstein—Understanding and Meaning
As analytical commentary on the *Philosophical Investigations*
682pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £35.
0 631 12111 0

The *Philosophical Investigations* begins with a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine is purporting to describe how, as a child, he learned to speak:

When my elders named some object and thereupon turned towards it, I saw this and I grasped that the object was designated by the sound they uttered when they meant to point to it. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our states of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.

Wittgenstein found in these charming remarks a certain conception of the nature of human language, namely, that words are names of objects, and that sentences consist of combinations of names. Countless readers of Augustine have, no doubt, passed over those lines without feeling that anything there was questionable. Some scholars have declared that Wittgenstein was unjust to Augustine, because the latter in other writings calls attention to words that don't stand for objects, and to other functions that words have when they do stand for objects.

Wittgenstein was indeed neither scholar nor historian, but merely a profound philosopher who knew what he was doing. He did not regard Augustine as stating a *theory* but rather as expressing a primitive or naive *picture* (*Bild*) of the nature of language. It is a picture in the sense in which an ordinary person expresses a vague picture of the relation of human perception to physical reality if he asks "Do you think the falling of trees in a forest produces *sounds* when no human beings are around?"

Because of its pervasiveness and huge influence in shaping philosophical theories of language and meaning, G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker (henceforth B/H) refer to Augustine's picture as an *Urbild* or proto-picture. It works like an unconscious force. Or as B/H put it, "a paradigm towards which theories gravitate". They concentrate on the Augustinian picture, demonstrating in detail how it guides the articulated theories of Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein's own *Tractatus*, and showing the extent to which the *Investigations* is a prolonged and massive criticism of the implications of the Augustinian picture, and of the various ingenious modifications and refinements of it that sophisticated philosophers have produced while revealing at the same time that they are captivated by the paradigm.

Volume One of the B/H commentary, despite its length, goes only as far as paragraph 184 of Part One of the *Investigations*. Part One has a total of 693 paragraphs, and Part Two has fifty-eight pages. A forthcoming Volume Two by B/H, entitled *Wittgenstein—Meaning and Mind*, will carry us from 184.

B/H wisely do not attempt a sentence-by-sentence commentary. They divide the 184 paragraphs into six Chapters according to topics, and each Chapter into Parts. There is an essay corresponding to each Chapter and each Part, followed by exegesis of Wittgenstein's paragraphs. The essays are the main meat of the book. They present the argumentative background for each topic, focusing especially on the views of Frege, Russell, and the *Tractatus*. B/H summarize these views in careful and perspicuous outline. They then present Wittgenstein's criticism point by point, supplementing the *Investigations* material drawn from the vast Wittgenstein corpus.

after 1929. Essays of particular excellence are those entitled "The uses of sentences", "Ostensive definition and its ramifications", "Logically proper names", "A word has meaning only in the context of a sentence", "Family resemblance", "Vagueness and determinacy of sense", "Proper names".

The problem of the "centrivity of language" expressed in the question, "How is it possible for us to understand sentences we have never heard before?", has been of utmost fascination to philosophers and linguists. Frege stated this seeming problem, and also his solution, in the following remarks:

The achievements of language are wonderful. By means of a few sounds and connections of sounds it is capable of expressing a vast number of thoughts, including even such as have never before been grasped or expressed by anyone. How are these achievements possible? It is in virtue of the fact that thoughts are built up out of thought-building-blocks. These building blocks correspond to groups of sounds from which the sentence is constructed, so that the construction of the sentence from sentence-components corresponds to the construction of the thought from thought-components. One can call the thought-components the sense of the corresponding sentence-components, just as one conceives of the thought as the sense of the sentence.

This is a nice example of the kind of view that Wittgenstein attacks. Frege's remarks are linked to the Augustinian picture, but refine it with the notion that the sense of a sentence is composed from the thought-components that correspond to the components of the sentence. Language is conceived of as a kind of calculus. The senses of complex expressions, including sentences, are derived from the senses of simpler constituents by a series of operations in accordance with definite rules. Our understanding of a sentence is a result of our calculating its sense from the senses of its constituents and their mode of combination. Wittgenstein had a similar conception in the *Tractatus*, but in the *Investigations* he assails it with a battery of objections which B/H summarize in detail.

B/H address themselves to various current misinterpretations of Wittgenstein: for example, the impression that when he says there is only a "family resemblance" between games or numbers, he is holding that the concept of a game, or of a number, is a "cluster concept"; or again, that he endorses a "cluster theory" of proper names. B/H are surely right in holding that Wittgenstein's remarks on these topics are merely negative—that he is not proposing theories but is merely criticizing the widespread assumption that in order to understand a concept-word or a proper name one must have, consciously or unconsciously, a grasp of necessary and sufficient conditions for applying the term.

Or take paragraph 80 of *Investigations* where Wittgenstein, speaking of the sentence "There is a chair", imagines bizarre circumstances in which we wouldn't know whether to say there is a chair there or not. This has given rise to the conclusion that Wittgenstein thinks that the concept of chair is "open-textured"—which is supposed to mean that the rules for defining "chair" are incomplete. If they were "complete" the truth-value of "There is a chair" would be decided for every conceivable situation. But as B/H neatly remark:

From the perspective of the *Investigations*, this is a muddle. The impossibility of satisfying *this* demand for completeness of definition shows not that the demand is utopian, but rather that it makes no sense. It is a complete distortion of what it is for a definition or explanation to be complete. Since the concept of open texture is introduced as correlative to such a concept of completeness, there is no such thing as open texture either.

B/H bring out the versatility and resourcefulness of Wittgenstein's treatment of a philosophical confusion. He circles around it, probing it from different angles, drawing implications in striking examples, inventing language-games as objects of comparison, but always seeking out the *Urbild* that feeds and preserves the confusion and makes it resistant to criticism. Wittgenstein was never satisfied with a crisp refutation. His characteristic attitude towards philosophical work is expressed in remarks written in 1931:

One must begin with the error and lead it to the truth. That is, one must uncover the source of error; otherwise hearing the truth won't help us. It cannot penetrate when something else is taking its place. To convince someone of the truth it is not enough to state it; but one must find the *path* from error to truth.

A commentary on the *Investigations* is a colossal undertaking. Baker and Hacker skilfully conduct the reader through the empire of controversy that surround the topics of sense and meaning. They have an admirable grasp of the whole corpus of Wittgenstein's writings, and they constantly display the sharp contrasts between Wittgenstein's thought and the currently influential "scientific" semantics.

In search of confirmation

By David Papineau

CLARK GLYMOUR :
Theory and Evidence
363pp. Guildford : Princeton University Press. £13.90. (paperback, £5.60).
0 691 07240 X

Clark Glymour confesses in his opening sentence that "If it is true that there are but two kinds of people in the world—the logical positivists and the god-damned English professors—then I suppose I am a logical positivist". Some modern readers might be tempted to stop right there. Nowadays we are generally agreed that, whatever one thinks of the English professors, there was something very wrong with the logical positivists. But Glymour is as aware of the positivists' failings as the rest of us, and those of their concerns that he revives in this admirable book he shows still to be important ones.

The logical positivists held that for a sentence to be meaningful it must be capable of experiential verification. In consequence they had a central problem with discourse about unobservables, and in particular with theoretical discourse in science. Their standard line of solution was some kind of definitional reduction of unobservables to observables, to be effected by certain supposed analytic "correspondence rules". A significant amount of contemporary work is still devoted to smashing away the internal difficulties of this solution. But most of this work has a definitely steam-age air, the philosophical machinery involved having been made obsolete some decades ago by Quine's attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction, and by criticisms of the idea that observation language is semantically basic.

Put as questions about meanings the positivists' worries were largely misconceived. But many of those questions can as well be read as questions about the confirmation relation: what makes one statement evidence for another? Glymour shows that under this interpretation they remain good questions. Not that the positivist tradition has left us any good answers. The widely accepted hypothetico-deductive account of confirmation has difficulty avoiding the consequence that if a piece of evidence confirms a hypothesis then it confirms the conjunction of that hypothesis with any statement whatsoever: plays designed to block this inevitably seem to end up with the equally unwanted consequence that observational evidence is never able to support any claims about unobservables.

In the face of this dilemma there has been a general retreat to multiplicatorial holism in the style of Quine and Duhem (Quine: "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body"), with vague hand-waving in the direction of "simplicity" and suchlike to explain how we choose when the evidential tribunal passes more than one corporate theory. But as Glymour rightly insists, this holism will not do. "Cite the color of the grass as evidence for or against Nixon's innocence and you will be judged either frivolous or daft."

His positive thesis is simple enough. A body of evidence supports a specific hypothesis if it implies values for the variables appearing in the hypothesis which actually satisfy the hypothesis, but are not logically predetermined to do so. The bite comes in the last clause. It is this that stops evidence confirming a hypothesis when the only route to some variable in it is from other variables in it via the hypothesis itself. In essence this is the idea that observation language is semantically basic.

in *Objective Knowledge* to bemoan Winston Churchill's lack of recognition as an important epistemologist, when he quotes Churchill as holding that support for our views about reality requires "what in military map-making is called a 'cross-bearing'". But for all that, it is a good idea and Glymour develops it with precision and intelligence.

The crucial feature of this approach is that it does not attempt to explicate confirmation simply in terms of the overall deductive relationships between hypotheses and evidence. Instead it focuses on the way these relationships depend on the internal logical structure of the sentences involved, by imposing specific requirements on how the quantities and properties mentioned in a hypothesis under test can be identified from the evidence.

Glymour's approach allows due recognition to the truth in holism. Getting from a body of evidence to the values of the variables in a given hypothesis will in general require the help of a number of other hypotheses, themselves requiring evidential assessment. But, Glymour points out, there is nothing stopping the evidential assessment of these other hypotheses in turn by similar procedures. The need for this "bootstrapping strategy", as he calls it, does mean that the various hypotheses in a given theory will be confirmationally interlocked to some extent. But even so the focus on the internal structure of the links involved gives a far finer resolution on confirmational relations than that allowed by the holist's picture of theories appearing before the evidential tribunal only as corporations. Indeed Glymour is able to make a good case that his approach enables us to keep the wanted baby of serious explanatory hypotheses about unobservables while getting rid of any idle theoretical bath water.

He applies the bootstrapping idea to a wide range of problems. But there are questions that he leaves unanswered. For one thing, his defence of the bootstrap strategy itself is entirely on an intuitive level, resting solely on its making sense of a number of things we know pre-theoretically to be so. This is by no means a worthless defence, but it does mean that nothing explicit is said about what "having reason to believe" a theory, in the sense of its being supported by the bootstrap strategy, has to do with the theory being true. To some extent it is obvious what might be said: the difficulties are raised by the question of what makes a theory containing unlisted (or untestable) hypotheses worse than one that differs only in that it does not. Perhaps the natural answer (and the one implicitly endorsed by Glymour) is that while the former theory may be true we (can) have no reason to accept it, and so would be better advised to stick with the latter. However, there are persuasive arguments of a verificationist sort for thinking that in some (if not all) cases of such pairs of theories there is no real choice to be made, simply because the two theories really say the same thing. How far such verificationist arguments are sound, though, depends on questions of meaning, and on this Glymour has little or nothing to say.

There is a further respect in which this omission is surprising. Throughout the book Glymour emphasizes the importance of the internal structure of scientific statements. This echoes Michael Dummett's frequent complaint against semantic holism, that by ignoring the way the meanings of sentences depend on the meanings of their parts semantic holism is unable to explain the existence of inferential links between sentences. But Dummett stresses further that if attributions of sentential structure are to play this explanatory role, then they themselves require an independent grounding. Exactly what this grounding should be depends on our general model of meaning. Dummett himself favours a non-standard verificationist model. The more popular model (and again the one implicitly endorsed by Glymour) is a realist one which sees meaning as a matter of words standing for independently existing things and sentences standing for independent states of reality. Considering these as general models of language, there is probably more to be said on the realist side. However in the specific case of theoretical discourse in science there are well-known arguments, both old and new, against taking a realist construal for granted. Given the weight he places on matters of internal logical structure, Glymour owes us something in the way of an explicit account of the semantics of scientific discourse. This positivists may have worried about meanings in the wrong way. It does not follow that we can manage without worrying about meanings at all.

Humphrey—a Tortoise

There was one of Oxford's undergraduates
Who, in '39, having drunk what was left in the bottle,
Closed Homer and Hesiod, Aristophanes, Aristotle,
Duly marking his place (he was reading Mods and Greats)

And went down—to fight for his country. In '46,
Finding each worker exactly where he had put it,
He read on from the line he had reached in each book when he shut it.
And the name of that man was Tronch—A. Chenevix.

—The same who later became headmaster of Eton.
From October, Humphrey sleeps in a cardboard box,
Having marked, as it were, in his mind where he last had his feet on

The ground, until April, when, finding his place by the rocks
In the sun, and his place in the shade, he just carries straight on.
It's a wonderful thing to see how wise he looks.

John Goudge

The supreme reward of madness

By A. H. T. Levi

M. A. SCREECH:
Ecstasy and 'The Praise of Folly'
267pp. Duckworth. £21.
0 7156 1044 9

This book is essentially an analysis of Erasmus's treatment of the related themes of rapture and ecstasy, with special reference to the final section of *The Praise of Folly* in which Folly's declaration that madness is man's supreme reward is shown to rely on the theology of ecstasy as developed from the Bible and various neo-Platonic sources, chiefly by the Greek Fathers. The analysis, although indisputably learned, will no doubt be challenged, notably because it sometimes forces the evidence and also because it plays down the possible reliance of Erasmus on the scholastic tradition and on the Italian neoplatonists. But whether or not M. A. Screech is broadly right, his book does raise a serious problem in the compartmentalization of learning which is seldom discussed, but for which a solution is long overdue.

Professor Screech is undoubtedly one of our most distinguished Renaissance scholars, specializing in the intellectual history of humanism, especially evangelical humanism, in early sixteenth-century France. In this book he shows not only the close familiarity with the Bible which characterizes all his work, but also that he can at any rate find his way round the Greek Fathers. Yet, perhaps over-identifying with his humanists, he seems unable to regard the medieval scholastics as much more than figures of fun.

The fact is that the history of medieval philosophy and theology is still seriously taught for the most part only inside the spiritually committed atmosphere of Catholic seminaries and religious communities. The texts of even important scholastics are generally available only in their libraries and, more importantly, the expertise required to understand them resides almost wholly in their staffs. What this book chiefly proves is that even the best intellectual historians not trained in one of the major Catholic institutions have as much chance of understanding what the scholastic theologians were arguing about as most of us would have of building a house were we confronted only with a pile of raw materials, a few DIY manuals and a tool kit.

The divide is leading to strange anomalies. In the histories of literature, law and political institutions, as in social, political and art history, it has now been established that change during the medieval Renaissance was both slow and gradual. The accent has been put more and more on the continuities. Only in those fields most subject to sectarian pressure—the histories of religion, theology, spirituality and perhaps education—do we still tend to accept the notion of a cultural break in the early sixteenth century, in which a "humanist" movement attempted to replace what it referred to as the "Gothic" barbarism of the middle ages. Such a view is increasingly if tardily coming to look simply implausible. It is a fair assumption that if more Renaissance scholars knew more about scholastic theology, the continuities in religion, theology, spirituality and education too would quickly become plainer.

Professor Screech's new book is presented in tandem with his recent *Rabelais*, with which it shares the same publisher, printer, type-face and binding. In many ways the two works share the same merits and defects: vast erudition, a certain insensitivity to literary registers, a conviction that what he has discovered is of greater importance than is actually the case. There are, however, differences. Rabelais is an author whom Screech has studied long and hard, and although he has little sympathy for, or knowledge of, what Rabelais was attacking, his commentary is certainly illuminating. With *Ecstasy and 'The Praise of Folly'* the trouble is the minefield of medieval spiritual and theological traditions through which he has to walk if he is effectively to cover his field.

There are very good new things in the book, like the detailed account of the importance of the 1514 edition, the importance for Erasmus of certain authors like Theophylact, and the play made by Folly of erotic forgetfulness. Ancient sources are used with skill. The erudition is Ingenious, and the analyses of rapture and ecstasy are fascinating. If one-sided—they neglect the wry and occasionally transmitted nature of Folly's arguments even in the moving and animated final section of what Erasmus called his *Folly*. The real strength lies in the way in which Screech brings to bear on Folly's assertions remarks made by Erasmus himself elsewhere, so illuminating their meaning and incidentally destroying Erasmus's defence that nothing in the *Folly* can be taken seriously, because it is put into Folly's own mouth, a defence which he never anyway intended to be taken seriously, since he defended Folly's more shocking assertions personally in his famous letter of 1515 to Martin Dorp.

Screech's achievement should not be underrated. The *Encomiastic* in particular, as well as the New Testament and its annotations, were plundered with real skill, although invariably without regard to changes of register. This is a pity, because Erasmus's degree of commitment to the cogency of his arguments and positions could increase or diminish, while the arguments themselves could be used on different levels. Even in the debate with Luther, when Erasmus was quite determined to defend free will, he deploys some of his arguments with his tongue in his cheek, seeking to persuade more than to prove, in doubtful partly to avoid the counter-charge of Pelagianism. Similarly, in the *Enchiridion* of 1532 he defends Origen partly with arguments which it is difficult to believe he or anybody else could have taken seriously. For fairly obvious rhetorical reasons he took to using arguments like a virtuoso, swathing them in great rhetorical developments and, like a lawyer aware of his own forensic skills, only rarely attempting a cool appeal to logic. He found satire a more effective weapon.

There are also, however, more serious weaknesses in Screech's approach to Erasmus. We are told, for instance, that Erasmus "delighted in rubbing home" the lesson that "on many an occasion Aquinas, say, or Duns Scotus, Nicolas of Lyra or Hugo Carrensis, can be shown to be impalesably wrong in their theology, rending into their Latin New Testament meanings which had no warrant whatsoever in the original Greek". This is to suppose that theology consists entirely in explaining the meaning of the New Testament, which is not what the scholastics thought, or for that matter Erasmus either, however much he used the meaning of the Greek as an argument. It is also unnecessarily cloak-and-dagger to run together Aquinas, one of the towering figures in the intellectual history of Europe, and Scotus, who thought as subtly as Descartes and used language as impenetrably as Heidegger, with the vulgarizing Nicolas of Lyra and an obscure thirteenth-century Biblical commentator.

His anti-scholastic *parti pris*—"Scotus, whom it was mental to caricature as the archetypal scholastic bunny"—makes it difficult for Screech to understand many of the levels at which Erasmus writes and argues. Erasmus did, after all, study at Montaigu and subsequently went to some trouble to be awarded the doctorate in scholastic theology which he had earned. He not infrequently parodies, alludes to, and even explains scholastic argument.

Screech however treats the scholastics with something like contempt, referring to them, for instance, by giving page numbers to arbitrary editions, so that it is impossible to verify what he says unless you happen to come across a copy of whichever edition he has used. (There is of course a convention of referring in the various subdivisions of scholastic texts so that a reader can refer to them in a different edition.) This carelessness extends even (page 151) to introducing a Latin howler into the title of one scholastic text, which is strange in an author otherwise so fastidious about exact nuances of usage.

One is not surprised, after this, that Screech always no awareness either of the way in which Erasmus discriminated between different scholastic theologians, or of the whole fascinating intellectual drama enacted in Europe from the twelfth century to the late fifteenth. He finds it difficult to identify commonplaces, like the *pneuma/caro* coupling, badly over-systematizes scholastic faculty psychology, so allowing himself to draw unwarranted conclusions from it, in the matter of the spirit-soul categories of 1 Thessalonians 5, would have profited had he Erasmus's familiarity with Roman liturgy, and distorts underplays the influence of Pico della Mirandola, who had set aligned himself with the Patristics, on Erasmus's de such outdated and ideologically mind works of reference as *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* when there are now safer guides available, notably in German.

I myself find Screech's Erasmus too drily and seriously intellectual without the element of impishness he found almost everywhere in his writings. It is difficult not to take seriously the praise of Christian folly in the final section of the *Folly*, but it is also difficult even after reading Screech, to believe Erasmus did not enjoy playing with concepts like rapture and ecstasy in only semi-serious support of a serious ideal. Even here, he remembered who she was, spoke on two levels at once, and quietly distanced herself by also being serious. Screech gives us is some interesting insights into the ultimate importance of certain of Folly's ideas.

It has to be remembered that Erasmus, who by 1511 was totally committed to humanist theological pursuits, was brought up in the anti-intellectual spirituality of the Brethren of the Common Life, and the *Folly* contains clear elements of whimsical self-parody and parody of intellectual uncertainty. He knows what is wrong, but is not so clear about what is right. In his very tentative satire, and even in the committedly plain final section Folly cannot prevent herself from parodying theological arguments.

In a book as ambitious as this there should be a bibliography, and in a book as expensive as this Greek words should be in Greek type and not in tiresomely scrappy transliterations.

Concord from discord

By Dudley Wilson

MALCOLM QUAINTON:
Ronsard's ordered chaos
Visions of flux and stability in the poetry of Pierre de Ronsard
262pp. Manchester University Press. £17.50.
0 7190 0760 7

Recently there has been something of a dearth in specialized studies of the poetry of Ronsard, so it is refreshing to come upon one so solid and well-coordinated as this, and concentrating on an area of the poet's activity which previous critics had treated only as a side-issue. Although he does not use the term, Malcolm Quainton is examining a particular aspect of Ronsard's "scientific" poetry: his use of the antitheses between flux and stability which produces the *discordia concors*, a commonplace basic to the assumptions of the French Renaissance. Thus Dr Quainton's book reflects the scientific universe of the time, with man hedged in by the restraints of the sublunary world, and dominated by the war between the conflicting elements. This war produces a curiously stable equilibrium, fluctuating, but only as the balance fluctuated before it settles, subject to time but returning to its beginning as the cyclic impulsions of the wheel of fortuna demand. Even death is incorporated into the structure for it is charmed out of existence by glory and fame, by the very process of poetry. This process gives the elect few access to ecstasy and even to a type of immortality on condition they do not fall into hubris.

The nature of Quainton's subject and the approach he has chosen are indicated by his chapter headings. A background chapter presents the cosmic and social framework, and Chapters Two, Three and Four deal with the concepts of Change, Fortune and Time. The second half of the book (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) is devoted to attitudes to death, to the commonplaces themselves of death and the means of transcending and accepting it. Quainton is mainly concerned with Ideas and philosophy and is adamant in thrusting aside the poet's religious beliefs. Even in the chapter devoted to transcending death he rightly emphasizes Ronsard's preference for euphemistic rather than Christian attitudes to death and for virtue and glory as posthumous benefits rather than the joys of a Christian paradise. His thematic approach is accompanied by a constant and illuminating search for sources, a combination which indicates a solidly traditional attitude towards literary criticism, more akin to French methods as they were twenty years ago than either to English ones or to the rather self-consciously up-to-date criticism in vogue in France at the moment.

To his desire to come to terms with the balance between Renaissance *imitation* and originality, Quainton adduces a mass of material but almost all of it is Classical and he rarely attempts to come to terms with the French poetic tradition within which Ronsard was writing. It is significant that when he makes use of the works of Marcel Raymond, he sees him entirely as a theorist of the baroque—although this is the most obviously pleasing side of Raymond's work, it fails to carry the authority of his earlier doctoral thesis. *Baroque and Renaissance Poetry* and *Ronsard* is merely cited by Quainton in the Bibliography. Such omissions, in addition to the large library of works on Ronsard, [illegible] said to belong to the main current of Renaissance studies in France.

The majority of Quainton's aims, stated clearly in his introduction, are faithfully carried out. The book is particularly strong in the emphasis it lays on the picturesque nature of Ronsard's gift and on what is described as his "general tendency towards descriptive realism and ornate textures". This applies not only in the natural vignette—the cameo of the flower or of the winnower at work—but also to the more grandiose eras of allegory. Here there are detailed studies of the poet's pictures of Fortune and of Time and the way in which he exploits and expands the medieval, moralizing tendency to characterize, classify and give a personal to what might have been, in Quainton's phrase, "mere symbol".

Quainton supports his thesis throughout with admirably chosen quotations, accompanied by judicious and illuminating commentary. Even so, he seems in general to shy away from the idea that any poet's originality must lie chiefly in the way in which he expresses himself. Is it going too far to suggest that the poet's attitudes (which are constantly in the foreground of this study) are in many ways the product of his actual verbal creation and evolve and crystallize as the poem itself evolves and crystallizes? Certainly, despite the sections devoted to the allegories of Fortune and Time, Quainton seems to place too little emphasis on Ronsard's rhetoric and gives insufficient attention to the close connection between "science" and metaphor in the poet's work.

Yet this last criticism may well be merely the reflection of a difference of point of view: certainly, the studies are valuable contributions to the large library of works on Ronsard.

Know thy place

By Peter Burke

HEATHER ARDEN:
Fools' Plays
214pp. Cambridge University Press. £15.
0 521 22513 2

Fools' Plays is a study of satire in the French *sotie*, defined as a short play in which actors dressed as *sots* appear. It focuses on the 420s to the 1570s but concentrated in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These plays have of course been much studied in the past hundred years or so. Heather Arden's contribution is distinctive in two respects. In the first place, there is a book-length chapter on the *soties* as drama, the 283 rules and their functions, in which she analyses some of the dramatic schemata most commonly employed, distinguishing three basic roles (evil-doer, victim and accuser), and arguing that the plays are "a symbolic reaffirmation of group values and rejection of a threatening force".

In the second place, and at greater length, the author concerns herself with the relationship between the plays and the society of the time. After dealing rather briefly with the awkward questions of the authors and the audience of the plays, she focuses on the social attitudes expressed in them. Generally speaking, women are satirized as "unfaithful, changeable and socially pretentious", the nobility, for failing short of their traditional duty in defend the weak; the upper clergy, for their desire for power; and the lower clergy, for the sins of the flesh. The third estate is not satirized collectively, but "gens nouveaux" (the upwardly mobile), bailiffs, tavern-keepers and *sergents* (one of the lower echelons of the legal profession), all receive a fair share of stick.

Arden has done a useful job of literary analysis. She is perhaps right to suggest that the recurrent line, "Chascun doit faire son mestier", is a fair summary of the moral and social attitudes expressed in the whole corpus of plays. Historians think in terms of a society of estates in which the individual who does not know his place and place others in danger of being called to account for the lack of a unified conception of the bourgeoisie as a "homogeneous class," in the plays nobles and *sergents* are satisfied, only the third estate as a whole.

The social analysis is less satisfactory. Arden ends by describing the *sotie* as "an expression of class antagonism", and explaining this antagonism by the widening gap between rich and poor in this period. The first point does not emerge from the preceding analysis; it is simply tacked on to it. The author does not explain in what sense it is possible for plays which do not use the language of class, and do not question the social hierarchy, to express class antagonism. The second point, about the polarization of French society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, has no evidence offered for it beyond a casual reference to the Pirenne. It cannot be taken for granted. "Chascun doit faire son mestier."

Early Romance Texts: An Anthology (362pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50. 0 521 22260 5), edited by Rodney Sampson, collects together 100 Romance texts, including the earliest known texts from all Romance-speaking areas. Ranging in time from the late eighth-early ninth century "Veronese riddle", and the Strasburg Oath of 842, to the reminiscences of Arthur Rimbaud (1822-1898), the last native speaker of Dalmatian, the texts are arranged into twelve groups by geographical area: Portuguese-Galician, Spanish, Catalan, Gascon, Provençal (Occitan), Franco-Provençal, French (Langue d'Oïl), Rhaeto-romanic, Italian, Dalmatian and Romanian. Accompanying the texts there are explanatory notes which provide general background information, guidance in understanding difficult sections and translations of all passages in Latin. A detailed Glossary is also provided which includes most individual words occurring in the texts.

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